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BROKEN BONDS.

VOL. II.

BROKEN BONDS.

BY

HAWLEY SMART,

AUTHOR OF

“BREEZIE LANGTON,” “FALSE CARDS,”

&c. &c.

“O fair green girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain.
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine,
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.”

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. II.



LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1874.

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251. b. 60.

BROKEN BONDS.

CHAPTER I.

IN THE QUARRIES.

A BRIGHT scorching August sun pours down upon the stone quarries of Portland, well-nigh as fiercely as it did some twelve months back upon the Courts of Westminster. Not a cloud upon the horizon—scarce a ripple on the deep blue sea. Standing upon the extreme eastern point of the island (if one may be allowed to call it so) the eye glances over a panorama of exquisite beauty. Directly facing you is the slightly

troubled line of broken water that marks the "Shambles"—sand-bank fatal in days bygone, before the light was placed there, to many a gallant ship. You can recognise the shoal easily by the deeper colour of the water and the ever-continuous ripple, while the surrounding sea is lapped in slumber. To the east lies the mouth of Weymouth's lovely bay, with Ringstead Point and the Burning Cliff standing out clear and distinct through the bright summer sunshine; while in the far-off horizon one catches the faint coast line of the Isle of Wight. To the West lies the open Channel, with the ever-tumbling, dancing waters of the tumultuous "Race" in the foreground. The faint murmur of the sea kissing the rocks five hundred feet beneath falls upon the ear, mingled with the far-off laughter from the harvest fields that lie between the village of Easton and the cliff.

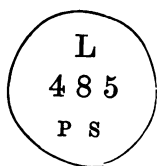
Gazing over this fair prospect, with vacant stare, is a man in whom that greatest of all earthly blessings—Hope—lies dead. Think what this means! Can anything be sadder? Can one picture a more awful spectacle than a man in his prime, with the pulses of life beating strong in his veins, and no hope left him in this world—a world, indeed, from which he has virtually departed—a world in which he is never destined again to see all those near and dear to him. No prospect of change or of amelioration in his lot. Nothing but the narrow cell by night—the eternal stone quarry by day—to look forward to for forty years, should he reach the three score and ten laid down as the average span of our existence here.

A barrow full of broken stone stands behind him as, pausing a moment from his

toil, his eyes wander listlessly over the glorious scene before him. Tall and well-built, clean shaven, with hair cut perfectly close, and complexion burnt to a brick-dust tan colour; such is the man's outward appearance. His inner self can but be guessed at from the sad, weary look of the blue eyes that rove so idly across the glittering waters.

He stands there, one of a party of close upon a score, all attired in the grey drab-bet coats, fustian knickerbockers, blue, red-hooped stockings, and grey, red-striped night-caps, that constitute the garb of a convict. Men of all ages, of all characters, of diversity of crimes, all burnt to that same brick-dust hue, and bearing at first sight a strange resemblance to each other. Their clothes are stamped promiscuously with broad arrows. Each bears on his arm a

medallion. Maurice Ellerton's has this, in black :



The letters signify Life, Penal Servitude ; the figures his number. Hideous distinction ! Number four hundred and eighty five shall quarry stone till his life be run, is the interpretation of that terrible badge.

Think what a destiny ! to wrestle with the granite rock all your days—at night the narrow cell and your reflections. No change—always this—no end to it save in death—no hope, however distant, for you in this world !

But the bronzed, bearded warder who is in charge of the party gives the word to

proceed, and these men, raising their barrows, wheel them steadily on to their destination. The broken stone is thrown out, and then they tramp silently back to the quarry whence they came.

A strange sight! Hundreds of brickdust-burnt men, clothed in drabbet grey, with pick and hammer, wrenching the stone from its bed, taciturn by compulsion, speechless by command. No sound but the incessant stroke of the tools, as they meet the rock, the creaking of the barrows, the falling of the splinters, or the occasional stern voice of a warder. Blue-coated, cutlass-belted, these stand scattered through the throng, an apparent handful amongst those they control. But as one studies the scene, one becomes aware of a cordon of sentries, who, with loaded firelocks, hem in that criminal herd. Clad also in blue these, and known as the convict guard.

A grim spectacle to gaze at, these silent labourers, outcasts of humanity of all ranks. Those whom the community has plucked from its bosom, and ostracised for crimes of cupidity, passion, or inextinguishable ferocity. Of all classes, of every grade of depravity, from well-nurtured, well-educated men of Maurice Ellerton's stamp, down to the very sweepings of the kennels; from those who have yielded to temptation in a moment of weakness, to the systematic plunderers of their fellows; from the homicide, whose outburst of hot wrath has been followed by bitter penitence, to the human tiger who would murder for a livelihood always, and at times from the mere lust of killing. For these latter exist, and there is no large public prison but what can furnish its specimens. Not always brutal, uneducated, clownish. Far from it; the most ferocious of this kind are generally possessed of some

education, and more than average intelligence ; but having once tasted blood, seem to be conscious of no moral obligation regarding the spilling of it—taking the life, indeed, of their fellows with as little compunction as they would that of a rat. Their only counterpart is “the man-killer,” that scourge of an Indian village. Every phase of crime is represented in that quarry—larceny, arson, forgery, felony, burglary, swindling, manslaughter, murder, &c. Exponents of all of them are to be found amongst those grey drabbed-clad labourers.

Maurice Ellerton drops his empty barrow wearily at a place where the rough stone is being squared into huge blocks, by the more skilled workmen ; other barrows, full of the *debris* occasioned by their stone-chisels and hammers, stand ready to be wheeled away in their turn. That is his employment at present. He is serving his noviciate—a

mere scavenger of the quarry, carrying away the waste stone for road-making purposes. In due course he will be instructed in the more advanced branches of that toil in which his life is destined to be passed. As he pauses for the few minutes the warder grants them before again continuing their labours, he is greeted with a quiet nod from a man busy shaping a rough block with mallet and chisel. A countenance worth looking at that, albeit the prison barber, and the sun, wind, and dust of the quarries have assimilated it much, at first sight, to those around it. A high forehead, with hair perceptibly worn away at the temples, very straight black brows, under which gleam long, deep-set dark eyes, high cheek bones, a large, full, sensual mouth, with a heavy jowl and under-jaw—not a pleasant face by any means. In figure a little above the medium height, spare and wiry. He bears upon his arm the

same terrible medallion that is blazoned on Maurice's. Like him, he also is condemned to chip stone till his life be finished. This is one of Maurice Ellerton's special acquaintances; for, despite all rules against speech, these men always find opportunity of exchanging some few words with their fellows.

Maurice had shrunk at first from opening his lips to anyone, but few can stand such dreadful isolation for long. There is a craving at times to converse implanted in our very nature. It is incumbent on our humanity to use our power of language.

Had the prison authorities been appealed to about No. 510—for so stood Maurice's acquaintance in their books—they would have told you that they had no more unmitigated scoundrel among the whole fifteen hundred convicts committed to their charge. His crime had been a robbery characterized

by circumstances of brutal and unexampled violence, and it was the merest accident that he had not been arraigned for murder, instead of on the charge for which he had been sentenced to penal servitude for life. They would further have stated it as their belief that he had led a career of bloodshed and plunder in Australia to which it would be hard to find a parallel, and that he was perfectly capable of recommencing it, should he ever find himself at liberty. More than once had he displayed the innate ferocity of his nature since he had been at Portland. Untameable, irreclaimable, and with a fierce thirst for blood, whenever the slumbering devil within him was roused, this man was a human tiger—a tiger now happily caged, but even held in awe by his brethren in captivity. Most of these shrank from friendship with savage James Carnoul.

And yet, with all this, he was by no

means an uneducated man ; could talk well and with a quiet manner, till something occurred to arouse his ferocious temper. Then blasphemy, execration, and ribaldry, poured like a torrent from between his lips ; and if he failed to avenge his fancied wrongs by brutal personal attack upon the offender, it was simply because an opportunity was not vouchd him. He would brag fiercely of the men he had slain beyond the seas at these times—of the gaols he had broke, and threaten the lives of all those that had to do with him. Warders kept a watchful eye on him, and were wont to loose their cutlasses in their sheath when they had special charge of Carnoul.

Maurice Ellerton as yet knew nothing of this man's history ; the bond between them was simply that they had talked together—a bond that nevertheless constitutes more within the walls of a prison than it does

outside by many degrees. One other associate has Maurice, but he is not present in the quarries. Mr. William Blades is employed in the blacksmith's shop, being a cunning craftsman in the science of forging and welding. Indeed, his dexterity in picking locks and the manufacturing of skeleton keys has been his ruin. Hero he of a celebrated city burglary, yet to be remembered of the public, should the public think fit to exercise that faculty; an enthusiast in his profession, who demands no more than to be left alone for twenty-four hours with any safe in London—Hobbs's Patent Safety, or other. "Never saw the strong box yet I couldn't get into if I'd time," says Mr. Blades. "It's a mere question of time. Nor the strong box I couldn't get out of either!" And then Mr. Blades winks pleasantly, as much as to insinuate that his continued residence at Portland is a

simple matter of choice and convenience.

Not quite all braggadocio, this upon the part of Mr. Bill Blades; but that worthy knows perfectly well that getting out of Portland prison is one thing, but getting off Portland Rock afterwards is another. Mr. Blades would inform you, in confidence, that he could very soon be outside the prison if that was any good to him, but that his private impression is that he should be back there again within four and twenty hours, only to be punished for such misdemeanour. That Maurice had made acquaintance with this man was only natural. Their cells adjoined, which, of course, gave many an opportunity of exchanging a word or two. Then, to one utterly prostrated as Maurice was, there was great attraction in the irrepressible vivacity of Bill Blades' disposition. Nothing seemed to daunt that jovial burglar. His vanity was extreme. "Lagged

for ten years I am," he once whispered to Maurice: "but, damme, it was the job of the year, and I ought to be introduced to visitors when they come round—that's what hurts my feelings. I'm a great public character, and these swells here have entered into a combination to crush my reputation."

Still pours down the fierce August sun, which the grey Portland stone reflects back with intensity. Not a breath of air comes across the hot dust-burdened quarry, while the children of crime continue their task with the perspiration streaming down their brick-dust-hued cheeks. The very warders mop their brows and fumble at their collars, to loosen the stiff military stock which their uniform entails upon them. Suddenly the prison clock strikes the half after eleven, and almost simultaneously clangs out the recall bell, the signal for all working parties to withdraw. The men fall in by squads,

and march off, each in charge of its particular warder. The convict guard gathers in its chain of sentries, forms up in mass, and brings up the rear. The several squads, upon gaining the parade ground within the prison gates (for be it clearly understood that the quarries lie outside the prison walls, and are perfectly free for the public to pass through), draw up in double ranks to be searched.

A great feature this searching in the discipline of our government prisons. The authorities are incessantly searching, and yet, with all their vigilance, it is perfectly surprising what the prisoners will continue to smuggle in and conceal in their cells, though these latter are constantly overhauled while their occupants are at work. The prisoners lift off their caps, to show there is nothing in them; then stand with uplifted arms, as the warders, with practised hands, run over

their dress from knee to arm-pit. This ceremony over, they are marched off to their respective halls.

The universities of crime assimilate to the universities of learning, in so much that they also are divided into colleges, or, as they are here termed, halls. (Is there not a St. Catherine's Hall at Oxford?) These halls are built in the form of a parallelogram. Spacious double entrance doors at either end open upon a broad corridor, from the centre of which springs a light iron staircase, running up for three stories, and breaking off into airy iron galleries on each landing. Along the sides of the hall run the three tiers of cells—Lilliputian apartments, about seven feet by four, and some seven or eight in height. These constitute the homes of the unfortunates. Such light as they receive comes from the corridor, through the window in the door, or from the lamp let into

the panel beside the door. That lamp is only to be opened from the corridor, and consequently not to be interfered with by an inmate of any cell, except by breaking the glass.

Maurice Ellerton's abode is on the ground-floor, at the extreme northerly end of B Hall. The last cell of all is tenanted by that genial burglar, Mr. William Blades, but Maurice's comes next. Once again the lock is turned upon him, and he has recourse to the sole employment of his lonely hours—the eating his heart out. Time was when all this was new to him, when the petty privations and indignities stung sharper than they do now, when his stomach recoiled from the unaccustomed food, and the daily toil seemed a strain greater than his untutored muscles could endure; then Maurice thought he should soon succumb to the punishment laid upon him. He knows better now. He is

fain to confess that he never was in better health. As for the rough, homely fare that he was at first unable to swallow, his sole complaint now is that he does not get enough of it. Yet he is leading a horrible life—to an educated man a terrible life, a mere mechanical existence. All mental life is dead in him. It is apt to die down when hope lies slain, and nothing but an impenetrable blackness represents the future. Alive, but buried! Of this world, yet with the pall thrown over him!

Maurice Ellerton sits upon his pallet-bed, musing upon the past, and peering, with dull, despairing gaze, into the years that lie before him. It is not that he disputes the righteousness of the doom meted out to him, although the sentence was harder than he had anticipated. He acknowledges his sin frankly, complains not at the punishment that it has entailed upon him. But to be

without hope, that is hard ; to think that he is never again to see other room than that cribbed, confined cell, of seven feet by four, in which he sits ; to know no other glimpse of the outside world than those grey, dusty quarries ; never again to see a tree, the grass, the corn-fields, the purling brook, to hear the sweet birds singing, the cawing of the rooks, or gaze upon the autumn's golden grain ; Prometheus-like, bound to the rock, with the vulture of despair battering upon his heart-strings ! Such the future that lies before him.

CHAPTER II.

PORTLAND ON SUNDAY.

IT is Sunday at Portland. Far and wide, in pleasant country villages throughout England, the sweet bells are ringing—"music's laughter," as Hood calls them. In the big cities the air resounds with the soft sonorous chime. Gaily-dressed crowds flock to their different temples, to pay thankful reverence to their Maker, to bring away holier and better aspirations for the morrow, it may be hoped. Even the solitary bell of Portland's prison seems mellowed as it summons its inmates to church this gorgeous

summer morning. All aglow with colour are the public gardens fronting that edifice. "Saucily froths and tumbles the Race, reminding one of a merciless coquette, whose relentless cruelty is not to be guessed at, except by those who have found themselves within the nets. Innocent and pretty enough looks that broken, dancing water, this bright September morning, and yet not a Portlander but could tell wild legends of the pitiless Race. Woe betide the ship that should be entangled in the Race in its wrath, when it seethes and bubbles like a caldron of Hecate's own brewing !

But "the Halls" are emptied, and their grey-jacketed inhabitants march silently and orderly in their respective squads to church. A very curious sight to look upon this. Picture to yourself upwards of a thousand of these brickdust-countenanced outcasts, ranged right and left of a cruciform building ;

on raised seats at every ten paces, a blue-coated warder, with belted cutlass. Five hundred or more prisoners to the right of you, five hundred or more to the left of you. The pulpit and priest in front. The convict guard, with loaded firelocks, behind.

Quietly and solemnly is the service conducted, as in any other place of worship. How far it touches those untamed natures, it were bootless to conjecture. They are much like any other congregation the writer has ever seen. Some listen attentively, some reverently, some with dull apathy, and others with evident weariness. But the blessing is at last spoken, and that congregation troops off, to enjoy the greatest boon that prison discipline accords them. On Sundays they are allowed to walk round the prison yards together, and indulge in unlimited conversation. No restriction is placed upon how they pair off; for an hour

they may mix as they list—are free to consort with each other as it pleases them.

These unfortunates are classified into three grades, such classification denoted always by that dread medallion stitched upon the sleeve of their jacket. It not only denotes the number they are known by, the punishment they are condemned to, but the colour of it determines the class to which they belong. They all commence in the third, symbolized by the black medallion, such as is worn by Maurice Ellerton and Carnoul. Good conduct for a certain period transmutes this into a yellow one, and certain privileges accrue to that grade. Further time and good conduct change this badge to blue, with yet further privileges attached to it. For instance, to the third-class is accorded but one hour of this liberty of converse; to the second, two; to the first, three. This privilege is allowed only

on the Sunday, and limited to one hour at a time. Maurice Ellerton still wears the black medallion, because time has not yet allowed of promotion to the second class; James Carnoul, because a human tiger is not likely to find favour or mitigation of his sentence—because the prison cat has been busy with his back—because the dark cells and himself are familiar with each other—because nothing but timely intervention saved his adding yet one more murder to the catalogue of his crimes. There is a night watchman now, though a warder once, who limps as he goes his rounds yet from the ferocious assault of that wild beast clothed in likeness of humanity. Pity for his own and mankind's sake that the gallows had not closed his career some time past. It may seem shocking to say, but there do appear at times in the annals of crime men irreclaimable, irredeemable, untameable,

who, both for their own sake and that of society, were best done away with. James Carnoul was one of these.

Maurice Ellerton is as yet strange to Portland and its ways. It is but some few weeks that he has been an inmate there. He had been sent, in the first instance, as is customary, to Millbank, where much solitude and reflection had plunged him into that dull apathy of despair which still possessed him. He leads a purely mechanical life at present ; shudders when he thinks of the past—shudders still more when he thinks of the future. Life to him seems henceforth but a dreary road, illumined by no ray of sunlight—an abyss of blackness, which no gleam of love or hope can ever brighten. He has nothing left to look forward to but the end—the cynic exultation that, when his soul escapes its prison, then also shall his body break lock and

ward; and yet he thinks sadly what weary years must be lived down ere he, in the very prime of his manhood, can hope for that.

He paces mechanically and dejectedly round the yard this Sunday morning, sole one of all that chattering throng who walks in silence and alone. He shrinks from the coarse companionship of his fellows; he is at no pains to make acquaintances. Of the two that he has some slight knowledge of, Carnoul is in trouble, and consequently debarred from this indulgence, while the vivacious Mr. Blades is gossiping with some one else.

But suddenly Bill Blades is struck by the woe-begone air of his neighbour in B Hall. Though a most irreclaimable scoundrel, Mr. Blades is a man of very kindly feeling, and he felt a sort of pity, to use his own vernacular, for "a swell," so down on his

luck." He crosses to Maurice, and exclaims,

"Well, mate, you don't look like having a deal to say, even if you'd some one to say it to; but it's a relief to have a chap gabble something in your ear when you've got the dismals, ain't it? Bless you, I know it. I was struck all of a heap like, the fust time I was quodded, but it ain't nothing when you're used to it. It's a healthy life, and you've no anxieties about the future. Say! put your hand again mine when we come to the far side, and I'll give you a 'chaw.'"

"You're very kind!" replied Maurice, "but I can't manage tobacco in that form."

"Then the sooner you qualifies the better," retorted Blades. "You see a smoke ain't to be brought off anyhow. If you don't chew what are you to do?"

"But how do you manage to get tobacco?"

"Well, you ain't fly to much, that's cer-

tain. Howsomever, in course you ain't. Why, if you can pay for it, and are clever at smuggling things in, you may contrive to have a good many little comforts. It ain't often I'm without tobacco, I tell you."

"But how do you get these things?" inquired Maurice.

"Well, you see, there's a good many things besides stone to be found in the quarries, for those who knows where to look for 'em. There's plenty of people outside who know how to hide what we wants if they're only paid for it. The officers and warders know it goes on just as well as we do. They does their best to stop it. It's just smuggling all over. Sometimes they seizes a lot, and sometimes we run it all right."

"But how do you get money? Can you get letters?"

"Well, my pals find the money. The

people outside who make a business of it charge high, but they deal on the square—yes, they're tolerably fair," said Mr. Blades, meditatively; "they make you pay about four shillings for a shilling's worth of bacca, but they run a good bit of risk. Bless your innocence! there are plenty of post-offices in the quarries that I knows of. Getting a chance to visit 'em's sometimes difficult, and smuggling in what you find there somewhat harder still; but there is excitement in it too. I never enjoyed a quid outside so much as I does one here."

"I should like to send away a letter," remarked Maurice, musingly.

"D'ye mean it, mate?" asked his companion.

"Yes, very seriously."

"'Spose you never thought about how you were to write it?" observed Mr. Blades, grinning.

"My God, no! I forgot I had neither pens, paper, nor ink."

"Ah!" replied the burglar, with a glance of compassion, "it struck me you'd want a bit of learning before you began to correspond with the Home Secretary about the injustice he's been a-doing you. Shall I teach you?"

Maurice nodded assent.

"Well, to begin with, blacking and water don't make bad ink, and I could very soon find a bit of steel or something I'd make a pen out of. But as you ain't handy, I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll just get a sheet of note-paper or two, a pen and some ink on my own account, and hand 'em over to you. I reckon you've friends with money, haven't you?"

"Yes. Not a great deal, perhaps, but——"

"Who could come down with a tenner

when necessary," interrupted Mr. Blades. "That's the ticket! I'll put you in communication with 'em by Portland special post. We don't want the Governor running his eye over our love-letters—do we?" continued that worthy, with a wink; "and when we write to inform the Home Secretary that the Governor ain't fit for his position, it isn't likely we should think him just the feller to forward our complaints. I say, wot was you lagged for?"

Maurice's face flushed slightly as he replied, quietly,

"Forgery."

"Ah!" said the loquacious Mr. Blades, "that's wot I calls educated burglary. When you've edication you go in for forgery, and lays hold of the mopusses that way; when you ain't, why, you sticks to the legitimate, as I do. There wasn't a better man in the profession than I was—and they knew it,"

exclaimed Mr. Blades, enthusiastically—the man's vanity completely overmastering him. "Why, there wasn't standing room in the Court during my trial, and those—what-d'ye-call-em?—sun-likeness chaps was a-shooting me all day. The picture-papers, too, sent specials to draw me—and 'the dailies' fellers to talk to me about how I did it."

"I recollect your trial," said Maurice. "You broke open a safe deemed impregnable."

The burglar indulged in a low laugh as he replied,

"Yes, and, wot's more, Bill Blades never yet saw the bolt, lock, or bar that could beat him, if he'd a mind to go through 'em."

"Why do you stop here, then?" exclaimed Maurice, suddenly.

Mr. Blades's face fell.

"I'll tell you," he replied, speaking

slowly "I could break out of this prison easy enough, if I set to work to think about it, but I couldn't get clear of the island. That's where it is! I have no mind to break out only to be brought back within twenty-four hours, to undergo dark cells, or 'the separates' on bread-and-water. But, hush! time's up; here come the warders to march us back. I'll not forget the note-paper and pen." And, with a nod to Maurice, Mr. Blades fell into his squad, and was duly walked away to his "private apartment."

When Maurice found himself once more locked up, he sat down upon his bed and began to think. For the first time since his sentence, interest was aroused in him. It was very rarely by the prison regulations that he was allowed to write or receive letters. True, he could count upon such from his mother, brother, and Rosie with certainty, when they were permitted; but, of course,

these were read in the first instance by the officials, as were also his replies. As regards Dainty and his cousin, the knowledge of this paralysed their pens. They could not bring themselves to write otherwise than guardedly when they knew that what they wrote was to be first perused by the eye of a stranger. It was only the all-powerful love of a mother that could rise superior to this. She alone dared to pour out all that was in her sore-stricken heart, reckless of who saw it, so that it greeted her son's eyes at last. Careless of comment or remark, so that she succeeded in mitigating his weary lot, in some respect.

Still it is easy to enter into the feeling which swayed Dainty and his cousin. Most of us would write with leaden pens if we thought that our careless words were to undergo scrutiny before they reached their destination. Such supervision is of course a

necessity to a prison; but it strikes hard upon those who still weep and sorrow for the captive; who, though they have nought to urge in extenuation of his crime, yet cannot help shedding bitter tears over his marred, lost, broken life?—who yet love him, and cling to him though society has cast him out. And even the greatest criminals have, as a rule, some one who is bowed to the dust with grief,—I won't say for their wrongdoing, but for the consequences it has entailed on them. When there is none left to drop a tear for you in such a strait, be your crime what it may, pray God that the grave may close over you quickly. Unloved, unwept, why linger here? Better the quiet oblivion of the tomb, with a meek trust in the all-merciful goodness of the Creator.

Maurice, ruminating on his quaint companion's words, begins to think that he sees

a way of communicating with those dear to him constantly—of writing and receiving letters that shall undergo no supervision of the authorities. He wants nothing more—only letters. For the earthy joys of Mr. Blades, such as tobacco, and occasional small bottles of spirits, he has no craving. But to hear often from those he loves will brighten his life wonderfully. The doubt and uncertainty, too, about that smuggled correspondence will once more give zest to his existence. He will have something to live for.

It is surprising upon what a minimum of hope men will feed, to what straws they will cling, at what shadows they will clutch. As the song says :

“ Hope directs the fancy, saving mortals from despair ;
And we all forget our sorrows, building castles in the air.”

But it is when hope lies slain within us that we taste the bitterness of death. It is seldom,

perhaps, that such awful doom descends on man in this world. In his direst necessity, in the cruellest lot ever meted out to him, there is ever, in the far distance, in the dim horizon of the future, a faint ray of heaven-born hope. A mere glimmer it may be, but to how many miserable lives, to how many pinched homes, to how many stricken hearts, to how many struggling human beings, does that far away gleam constitute the whole poetry of existence, the one thing that makes this sordid every-day life endurable? Sole gift of the gods not lost to mankind through Pandora's fatal curiosity.

And for some months Maurice Ellerton had been without hope. It is but a small blessing that he has even now to look forward to, but it will be something to scheme, to work for. Letters! Yes, letters that shall be unread of the prison authorities, that is his aim and ambition now. He is

possessed already with a feverish impatience to commence operations. That alone shows what a neophyte he is in the contravention of prison discipline. Mr. Blades could have taught him better. He would have told him that such indirect breach of the prison rules was only to be accomplished by much patience, cunning, and wariness; that communication with the outside world necessitated watching for days for an opportunity; that it entailed equal perseverance, adroitness, and assiduity to obtain a reply.

Maurice has conjured up a very different picture, and imagines himself carrying on a considerable correspondence almost immediately. It is the first ray of light that has crossed his brain since Dainty's fierce hand-grip assured him that he was not all abandoned of his kin when that terrible sentence, "Penal Servitude for Life," smote upon his ear. He sees again the crowd of curious

faces that were bent upon him as he left the dock—many, too, that were well known to him, and had smiled genial greeting to his salute but a few weeks before. He had cursed humanity in his heart as the prison-van bore him away, and he thought over how those with whom he had dined and jested had come to look upon him in his agony, to gaze upon him at the stake. To count upon little sympathy from acquaintance, to discover, when the measure of friendship shall be tested, what a small residue remains to you, was a lesson Maurice Ellerton had then to learn.

It may be urged that a criminal is unentitled to such sympathy; and yet, if there is tinge enough of romance about his crime, how often he receives it. Still those who have known a man well might be expected to feel some regret for his fall, his degrada-

tion, albeit there is no palliation of his offending visible to their eyes.

Had Rolf Laroom's view of the case been known to the public, then the man that was supposed to have committed perjury to save from the effects of his forgeries the estate of the woman he loved, would have been assured of their sympathy. There was romance about that idea, and he would have been much pitied, perhaps even glorified. The second crime would have obliterated the first. It would have been said this man sacrificed himself to save a woman from the results of his iniquity. That he had simply committed two crimes instead of one, that he had elected to defraud his creditors instead of his cousin, would not have been noted, nor entered into by the world generally.

But Mr. Laroom's suspicions, and the grounds for them, were known only to him-

self, and one or two of his coadjutors. Even his fierce exclamation in the court had made no permanent impression, although it had occasioned some sensation at the time. Whether he was right or not in his conjecture time may show.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOWING OF THE SEED.

SLOWLY pacing the pier at Dieppe, and glancing occasionally over the bright, sunny waters, at the smoke of a still distant steamer, are two ladies; the elder attired in deep mourning, and wrapped in her own reveries, with face pale and sad, seems to pay but little heed to the prattle of her young companion. This latter, too, is marvellously sobered in manner since we last saw her a year ago. The terrible blow that has fallen upon the house of Ellerton has wrought a great change in Rose Fielding.

The capricious little fairy we once knew has been transmuted into a loving, watchful woman, by the sorrow that has come upon them. Her devotion to Mrs. Ellerton is immeasurable. She hovers over her with untiring assiduity, ever ready to weep with her, or to talk softly over the bright bygone days that are fled; to throw what comfort she may on the future; to picture forth such relief as she can conjure up to their present grief and desolation; to whisper, with fond caresses, that mitigation of such sentences always comes with time—that the mother will yet clasp her boy in her arms again. Who so clever as Rosie at pleading extenuating circumstances for her cousin's crime? Who so satisfied with the results of her special pleading as she, when winning a faint smile from that woe-worn face.

Dieppe, gossiping, inquisitive, like any other small watering-place, is perfectly

aware of the history of that elderly lady in deep mourning, and the pretty fair-haired girl who is always by her side. Dieppe, somewhat sore from sharp encounters with adventurers and *mauvais sujets*, with bitter recollections of distinguished English people who had left it abruptly, and with strange oblivion of various outstanding accounts, had turned up its virtuous nose in the first instance, and eyed with cold disdain these relations of one "who is expiating his crimes at the galleys," as they phrased it. But the quiet unobtrusive life the two women led, and especially the promptitude with which their modest bills were always settled, had induced Dieppe lately to regard them rather with sympathy. It is true Dieppe society, that little mixed cosmopolitan hot-bed of scandal, had, after much gossip and shaking of its head, decided that the line must be drawn somewhere, and that "really it was

quite impossible, you know. They were very sorry for Mrs. Ellerton; believed her to be a woman much to be pitied; but you can't call upon a convict's mother, you know." And then Dieppe society shook its head once more, and waited to hear what you had to say to that. Rosie and her aunt were happily ignorant of the fierce discussion that had gone on about them. Desiring to live in complete retirement, it had never entered their heads that Dieppe society had agitated its august mind as to whether they might be received into its bosom. Perhaps things had turned out for the best, for Dieppe would have probably resented the refusal of the hand of fellowship, had it been proffered, while most assuredly it would have been rejected if extended.

It was little likely that Mrs. Ellerton and Rosie, bowed down by their sorrow, should covet the making of mere watering-place

acquaintances. The mother seemed all insensible of the disgrace that attaches itself, however unjustly, to the near relations of a great criminal. She thought only of her son, of his misery, of his punishment. How the world might regard her, was a petty consideration, that had as yet scarce crossed her mind. With Rosie it was different; she was keenly sensitive on this point. Not that for one moment she ever blenched at such ordeal. But she was painfully alive to the curious stare, the half-whispered commentary, that so constantly attended their appearance in public. To all this Mrs. Ellerton was utterly blind. She had put on mourning as soon as she heard the result of Maurice's trial: she made little parade of her feelings, but Rosie knew well that till her death she would never wear other than such sombre raiment, unless, by some unforeseen agency, Maurice should be restored to her;

and at the bottom of Mrs. Ellerton's heart there still lurked a hope, almost amounting to a belief, in this apparent improbability. She could have given no reason—would, indeed, have shrunk from admitting such weakness—to anyone ; but Rosie knew it, as she did most other things connected with her adored “ mother.”

But the steamer nears the entrance of the harbour, and Rosie strains her eyes to see if she can recognise any one among the passengers.

“ Yes, mother !” she exclaims at length, as she drops her opera-glasses. “ He is there, I am sure—I saw him. Let us walk back to the landing-stage. The packet will be there almost as soon we now.”

Slowly the steamer works her way up the harbour ; with vociferous shrieks lets off her steam, and amid much turmoil, screaming, and execration, is warped along the quay .

side. Dainty, just indicating his portmanteau and travelling bag to a commissionaire, steps lightly on shore. Already his quick eye has discerned his mother and cousin on the outskirts of the crowd. Another moment he has clasped the former in his arms, and shaken hands with the latter.

Miss Fielding is not altogether satisfied with this salutation. She reflects that Dainty used to kiss her on such occasions, and wonders a little why he has omitted that ceremony now. She is always rather jealous and critical of his attentions to herself, although she is scarcely aware of it, and would have probably indignantly denied that it was so, had anyone ventured to make such comment in her hearing.

"It is a great comfort to see you again, Frank," said Mrs. Ellerton, with a faint smile, as she slipped her hand within her

son's arm, and they walked away in the direction of the market-place.

"Good of you to say so, mother," replied Dainty. "I hope you've got some dinner for me, for your boy is in a state of fierce carnivorous hunger, and his uppermost thought at present is for the flesh-pots."

"Yes, we counted on your being at dinner with us to-night. Rosie was quite confident about it. But I, Frank, can never be sanguine again."

"Hush!" replied Dainty, as he pressed her arm. "It's been a sore sorrow to get through, and it's not to be supposed we can any of us forget it. Still, mother, you have learnt to bear it bravely now—is it not so?" and Frank Ellerton peered inquisitively into his mother's face.

She smiled fondly up at him as she replied,

"I've dried my tears, dear, but I don't

think I can say much more. My burden I must carry to my grave. My sole hope is to see him once more," and her eyes sought her son's wistfully, but Dainty only gazed sadly back into her face. "They used to laugh at me," she continued, with a nervous twitching of her poor pale lips, "and say that I loved you best, Frank: but, you see, Maurice needs my love most now. I am sometimes sorry that I didn't insist upon seeing him before he left London; but I suppose that he and you were right in your decision, and we were bound to think a little of Rosie. It would have been very terrible for her to have been dragged before a court of law."

"I did what he most wished, mother," replied Dainty, in a low voice, "and it was consolation to him in his misery to think that you were spared in some measure all the gossip his crime called forth. I think

myself he judged rightly in the matter."

"Ah, well!" she replied mournfully, "it is sad grief to a mother when woe comes upon her children. It is bitter agony when she finds herself debarred from whispering her own love and sympathy into their ears. It has been hard—it is still hard—to bear. I know, Frank, dear, you have done the best you could for all of us, but, my boy, I must sorrow for Maurice till my death."

Dainty said nothing, but pressed the little hand that rested on his arm, and turned his head away. The sight of his mother's patient, woe-worn face was wont to bring a choking sensation into his throat, that necessitated some effort to master.

"We must wait a little for Rosie," he said at length, for Miss Fielding had loitered some little distance behind them, not wishing to intrude upon the first interview between mother and son; but she was not

many paces in the rear, and upon seeing that she was waited for, speedily joined them.

It was a quiet, but not altogether unhappy dinner that the trio went through that evening. Sobered in great measure though Rosie was, still the elasticity of her years could not be altogether repressed, and a gleam of the old fun still flashed out occasionally. Nor was Mrs. Ellerton the least the kind of woman to frown upon such sallies. If she herself was still unable to put away that great sorrow that had befallen her, yet she could rejoice to see that her children had to some extent got over it. True, as she contemplated Dainty's face in the mellow lamplight, she could but recognise a certain set hardness that had been altogether wanting there little more than a twelvemonth back. For Dainty, too, was changed. That *insouciant* hussar, who had

floated so carelessly down life's summer stream, has become silent, reserved, and somewhat defiant of the world of late. He mixes but little in society now, and is keenly sensitive to any appearance of slight that may be put upon him. He who a short time back, in his self-contained, indolent way, never dreamt but that his presence must be acceptable anywhere, now regards his reception jealously.

Society is tolerably callous and hard of heart, it must be allowed. Still it seldom goes the length of tabooing an acknowledged favourite for the sins of his relatives—not quite so merciful perhaps with regard to the other sex—but to a man it is usually lenient. Still to a man in Dainty's present mood, it is not easy to be civil and hospitable. When a man is anticipating slight or affront, he rarely fails to discover them. It is impossible he should not do so; he takes

umbrage at shadows ; twists the most common-place observation into a remark to his own disparagement. There is no dealing, with such warped, jealous natures. Like the thief who sees an officer in every bush, so they discover jibe or sneer in every sentence addressed to them. Dainty of late has taken much offence upon positively no foundation. He feels his brother's disgrace so sorely, that he picks quarrels with society upon quite imaginary grounds ; rejects invitations sent to him from pure kindness, and dictated by a chivalrous disposition to show that the senders have no wish of confounding him with Maurice's wrong-doing, because, as he says bitterly, "they want to show off the forger's brother at their tables."

Naturally society somewhat falls off from a man who responds to its advances in this wise. Dainty even, to some extent, shirks the companionship of his brother officers, albeit they

have sympathised most sincerely with him in his trouble. A very fair test of a man's worth in general is the light in which his regiment regard his coming to grief. The —th Hussars were unfeignedly sorry for Dainty, from the trumpeter of his troop to the colonel commanding.

"And how long are you going to honour us with your company?" inquired Rosie as, dinner finished, they sit over their coffee at the open window, listening to the drums and bugles of the regiment at the castle.

"Only for four days," replied Dainty. "I have but a week's leave, and there's the coming and going. It is hard to get away for longer at this time of the year; and you, Rosie, how do you get on here?—it must be dull for you."

"No," she replied. "I have learnt to do without society now. At first, of course, one was too grieved to think of it, and now

I have got quite used to living with my music and my pencil. You are very good, Dainty; you take care we shall never want for new books or new music."

An hour of such desultory conversation, and then Frank Ellerton announces his intention of smoking his cigar on the pier.

"Delightful!" exclaims Rosie. "You'll take me with you, of course. You won't mind being left alone, mother, for an hour?"

"Not at all, but I shall say good night, as I shall very likely be gone to bed before you come in again."

Another quarter of an hour saw Rosie and her cousin pacing the pier, and engaged in earnest conversation.

"Yes, she looks frail," replied the girl, "and the blow at first told upon her fearfully. She'll never get over it, Dainty—never be the bright, bonnie mother she was

again. It weighs upon her mind much that she did not see Maurice, at all events once before she left town. Do you know the dearest hope of her life now?"

"That he may be pardoned?" said her cousin, gently. "But there's little chance of it."

"No; she'd be content with less than that. If she might but see him again, she'd be satisfied." And Rosie lifted her blue eyes somewhat inquisitively to her companion's face.

"I'm afraid the authorities wouldn't allow that; besides, it would be a very sad meeting for her, even if it were possible. She would be inexpressibly shocked to see Maurice in his prison garb, and otherwise much changed. Listen, Rosie; I know all that part of the world well, and once went over Portland Prison. I thought, a few months ago, it would be a comfort to have

a look at him, poor dear fellow, even from a distance. I ran down to Weymouth for two nights, intending to pass a couple of days loitering about the quarries till I saw him. I crossed over to Portland, but after I had encountered the first gang of prisoners, I had no heart to go on. Better, I thought, never to see him more than to see him in his disgrace. And then it flashed across me how exquisitely painful it would be for him to be looked upon in his humiliation by anyone he loved."

"I can fancy that," replied Miss Fielding softly; "but," she continued, emphasizing her words, "the mother *must* see him again!"

"Impossible!" replied Dainty, as the smoke-wreaths curled between his lips.

"There is nothing impossible to a man, sir," retorted Rosie, sharply.

Ellerton gazed at her for a moment in

no little astonishment, and then replied quietly,

“Nor anything unimaginable by a woman.”

“I imagine nothing but what is possible,” rejoined Miss Fielding.

“If you would give your imaginings definite shape, I should be a better judge of that point,” replied her cousin, curtly.

Rosie stopped abruptly in her walk, paused for a moment, and then exclaimed, in clear ringing tones,

“If I were a man, I would never rest till I had Maurice out of Portland, by fair means or foul. Now, do you understand what I mean?”

As Dainty gazed upon the fresh young face lifted up to the moonlight, and lit up with all the enthusiasm that the wild thoughts within her brain had conjured up,

he thought he had never recognised his cousin's delicate beauty before.

"No," he replied at length, "I don't think I do."

"You are dull of comprehension, then," she retorted angrily. "What I mean is this: Prisons have been broke before now. Surely a little assistance from without, and Maurice might soon be clear of Portland."

A faint smile played over Dainty's face as he replied,

"The days of Jack Sheppard are over, child. Men don't escape from their bonds so easy in these times."

" 'Oh, that I were a man, for his sake!—or that I had any friend who would be a man for my sake,' as Beatrice says," exclaimed Rosie, passionately. "Will you affirm to me that no one ever succeeds in breaking out of prison in these days?"

"I can hardly say—I don't know—I don't——"

"Stop!" she interrupted, vehemently. "You say you know those parts. Did you never hear of a prisoner escaping?"

"Well, yes. By Jove! now I come to think of it, there was one fellow who got as far as Dorchester; I recollect his being taken in the town when I was quartered there."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, triumphantly—"I knew it. Had he but friends to have helped him, he would doubtless have got clear off. You must try it, Dainty. Of course, he would have to fly abroad, but he could go anywhere. There are places where he would be safe—anything sooner than that he should pass his life in the misery he does now—anything that may place him once more by his mother's side."

She ceased, and stood looking up into

his face in mute, passionate appeal; the moonbeams playing through her chestnut tresses, and irradiating her clear-cut, delicate features.

"I am afraid you are talking nonsense, Rosie," he replied, at length. "Escapes from Portland are very rare; and those who have achieved them have, I fancy, been invariably recaptured in the course of a few days."

"What has been done can be done again. If they were re-taken, it was most likely for want of assistance afterwards," replied the girl, sententiously. "Will you try, Dainty, to rescue him?"

And once more Miss Fielding looked anxiously into her cousin's face.

"No," returned Ellerton, somewhat roughly. "But come, it is time to go home, and cease planning hopeless conspiracies."

"It were easily done if there were a man to do it," replied Rosie, bitterly, as with a swift step she turned homewards.

"She must love him very dearly," mused Dainty Ellerton, as he strode along by her side. "But her schemes are preposterous!"

Indignant with the reception of her plans, Miss Fielding bade her cousin a somewhat cold "good night," and betook herself at once to her pillow. As for Dainty, he stood for a quarter of an hour gazing out into the moon-lit street, and musing over Rosie's affection for Maurice—thinking how sad it was that this, also, should be added to the bitter cup it had been their fortune to taste. He smiled as he reflected on Rosie's romantic notions, and thought how awkward would be his situation as an officer in Her Majesty's service, aiding and abetting a criminal to

escape from one of Her Majesty's prisons. Well, he need not trouble himself much about that; a very "castle in the air" the idea of rescuing Maurice from his fate, and their all settling down in some foreign land! Yet Dainty thought he could leave the regiment with much less regret now than he could have done a few months back. To start afresh in some country where their story was unknown, was a picture not without its charms to him in his present state of mind.

During the remaining three days of his stay, Rosie returned continually to her point, with all a woman's pertinacity. He might pooh-pooh her, laugh at her, growl at her, snub her, but she insisted upon talking about it. She insisted that it was possible. She insisted that it was his duty to rescue Maurice from his degradation—to pour balm once more into his mother's

heart. Dainty might pish and psha, and vow she talked the veriest nonsense, but Rosie was inextinguishable.

When a pretty girl dedicates three days to drumming an idea into our heads, although we may deem it a fallacy, regard it as an absurdity, and even laugh at the fair but illogical propounder, yet we do not forget it. We may never act upon it, but it remains with us, a sweet bit of fooling, perhaps, but, withal, to be looked pleasantly back upon.

Now, this was precisely Dainty Ellerton's case ; that wild notion of Rosie's was implanted in his brain, had taken no definite shape as yet, but was still there to be turned over and reflected upon. As he steamed back to New-haven Dainty meditated more upon it than Miss Fielding could have conceived possible, considering the contempt he had held it in, during the last three days. But Ellerton, as

we know, was in a morbid frame of mind concerning society just now. He was incessantly attributing motives to society of which society never even dreamt. He conjured up the mocking finger of scorn pointing towards him, when no such finger was ever raised. He mistrusted the world, and deemed it jibed at him when it only smiled.

A man in this state is not unlikely to lend himself to wildest chimeras, and to wrench himself clear of all old associations with savage exultation.

Chewing the cud of his morbid imaginings off storm-beaten Beachy Head, we must now leave Dainty for the present.

CHAPTER IV.

THE WEDDING GUEST.

“ITS truth I’m telling you, Miss Jennie.

I was peeping about last night, trying if I could see some of the ‘good people’ Mr. Weaver’s always talking about. It is hard; I look so often for them, and I never find ’em. Mr. Weaver said ‘she’d likely help me,’” continued Nance, waving her hand in the direction of the well, “but though I’ve often asked her she won’t.”

“But where was it you saw him?” inquired Jennie Holdershed. The pair were on the top of that grassy knoll that overhung the wishing-well, and which commanded

such a lovely view of Weymouth Bay. The identical spot, indeed, at which our story commenced.

"Well, it was just by the edge of the wood there ; I was creeping along the wall, when he suddenly sprang over the stile. I saw the face well, for the moon shone down upon it, and then he disappeared down the hill. Mind, I think it was only his wraith," said Nance, dropping her voice, "but it was the face of that gentleman who used to go out fishing with you so often before Mr. Weaver came. I hate him."

"Nonsense, Nance," replied Jennie. "If it was he whom you saw, I'm sure he was always very kind to you. You shouldn't hate anyone—but certainly not without rhyme or reason."

The elfish child opened her eyes wide, and shook the unkempt locks off her face as she replied,

"Why, you hate him, too ! Do you mind your wish the day he bid you good-bye ; the day you threw your glass into the well ? It's because he angered you that I do hate him."

"Hush, Nance," returned the girl, smoothing back the child's hair caressingly, while the blood mounted in her own cheeks. "We often say more than we mean. I was tired and vexed that day. Besides, he's been in sad trouble since, and I'm very sorry for him."

"I don't like him," rejoined Nance, doggedly. "He's born to work you harm. I saw it in the well one night, and I dreamt it twice."

"And what did you dream and see ?" inquired Jennie, with no little curiosity.

"Always the same thing," whispered Nance. "'She' showed it me first. You were struggling in the water together, and I

saw you sink lower and lower, and your struggles grew weaker and, weaker, till at last you were both quite still ; and then," muttered Nance, in awe-struck tones, " you both sank slowly out of my sight, and I knew that you were drowned. All your hair was loose and tangled, your face so pale and still, your eyes closed ; but I can never see his face just after the first. I wonder why that is?" said Nance, meditatively.

Jennie made no reply. She was lost in thought. Slowly but steadily all this year had her love for Dainty Ellerton been growing up. She had never seen him—never heard from him, but she had heard plenty about him from Mr. Weaver. He it was who brought over the paper, and made manifest to her the terrible blow that had fallen upon the Ellertons. The honest, impulsive Irishman was sorely distressed about the whole affair, not only on account of his idol Dainty,

but he knew them both. The house had been ever open to him on his stray visits to London, and he was immeasurably grieved at the result of Maurice's trial. He and Jennie had moaned over it together; like a true son of Erin, he grew more amorous as he grew more pathetic; and after having relieved himself of a monody concerning the Ellertons, Tim was wont to endeavour to console both himself and his auditor with a little love-making. He asked Jennie indeed to marry him every few weeks, and was gravely and regularly refused. It seemed to make no manner of difference in their relations. Mr. Weaver upon these occasions threw much tragedy into his leave-taking.

‘Fare thee well, and if for ever,
Still for ever fare thee well,”

was a very favourite quotation of his as he shook hands. To which Jennie, with a merry laugh, was wont to reply, “Ah, mind

you come over on Wednesday, if it's a fishing day. I want some trout, and you must help me to kill some." Indistinctly muttering something about crushed feelings and wounded pride, Mr. Weaver would bid Miss Holdershed a stately good night. Much emphasis on the "Miss Holdershed"—he always called her Miss Jennie except upon these momentous occasions. But he would reappear again in a day or two, apparently quite oblivious that "me heart and me fortune" had been rejected. The one was a cullender, the other a myth, but it was only in these moments of romantic enthusiasm that Tim ever laid claim to the latter.

At last Jennie rouses herself, and exclaims, "Come, Nance, it's time to trot home."

"Will you mind what I've been telling you?" asked Nance.

"What was that, child?"

"To beware of that man. What is

it they call him? Ellton—Ellton—Elliton, ain't it?"

"Pooh, you little goose! I'm not likely to see him again for one thing, and he'd work me no harm if I did for another."

"Oh, Miss Jennie! Miss Jennie! don't be wilful," cried Nance, earnestly. "It was 'the lady' herself showed it me in the well. Whatever she shows you there at midnight always comes true."

Jennie made no answer. She knew perfectly that the child emphatically believed in the "lady of the well;" that she was wont to sit by its side peering into its deep, clear waters these summer nights, and fancy she saw pictures in its shadows. She was a child of dreams, with faith in fairies, brownies, apparitions, and visions. Connected with the world her belief was limited to unmeasured love and trust in Jennie. Who else had ever shown much kindness, or interested

themselves in her, little passionate Pagan that she was? With a warm, affectionate heart under her ragged frock, and a quick, intelligence beneath her unkempt dishevelled locks all the same—locks, too, that she did make great efforts at times to render smooth, in obedience to Jennie's rebukes for their general untidiness.

By this time they had descended the path through the wood, and were but a few feet above the stream. The well is only a pool, through which the brook flows, and around two sides of which runs a low stone parapet. Glancing through the bushes, Jennie is aware of a man resting on this parapet. Her heart gives a little jump—just possible she thinks that it may be he with whom her mind is at present occupied, but a second peep shows her that it is only Mr. Weaver.

He is gazing vacantly into the waters

beneath him, and no sooner does Nance descry him than Jennie feels a sharp tug at her dress, and over her shoulder comes a quick, earnest whisper.

“Hist! Miss Jennie; maybe she’s talking to him.”

But Jennie refuses to yield to her follower’s superstition, and a pebble, displaced by her feet, rolling down the bank, causes Mr. Weaver to raise his head.

“Ah!” he exclaims, rising “I’ve been to look for you at the cottage, and as you weren’t there, I thought, maybe, you might be somewhere else.”

“Very glad to see you,” replied Jennie, as she shook hands with him, laughing. “And you thought somewhere else meant here.”

“That’s so,” returned Mr. Weaver, gravely. “Well, Nance, my woman, have you found the ‘good people’ yet?”

"No," replied the child. "Do you think there are any in Dorsetshire?"

"'Tis positive I am, as that I'm in these parts," replied Tim, with a droll twinkle in his eye. "Bedad, Nance, we can't have ye throwing doubts upon the neighbourhood in that way."

The child looked at him for a minute with a puzzled expression, and then replied petulantly,

"If you mean the folk about here are good, they ain't—except her," and Nance pointed to Jennie.

"Hush, Nance, you little spitfire!" said Jennie, gently; "you don't mean that, you know."

"Yes, I do," replied the child, doggedly. "Nobody is ever good to me but you."

"Och, ye kitten! d'ye mane that I'm not

a friend to ye!" inquired Tim Weaver, brusquely.

"I ain't sure," said Nance. "I believe you're telling me lies about the 'good people.'"

"Troth, I never told ye I'd seen thim. I only told ye I'd heard of thim. Maybe, neither you nor I will ever see thim. I never saw 'the lady' here, but it don't follow, Nance, I never will."

This last bit of casuistry completely vanquished the child, and she bid Mr. Weaver a gracious good-bye before tripping across to her cottage.

"Did you see my uncle?" asked Jennie. "He went into Weymouth to attend an old shipmate's wedding, and I am afraid he will return in what he terms a nor'-nor'-west-by-north state. He usually does from such festivities."

"No. I looked in, but the Captain wasn't at home," replied Tim. "The ould gentle-

man 'll be for seeing the fun out, I'm thinking. But I've something to tell you. Who do you think's at Portland?"

Jennie started slightly, and then replied, "I don't know."

"Maurice Ellerton," said Tim, very gravely; "and it seems he's been for some time, though I only knew it yesterday. It's very sad, you know, for me. It'd break the heart of me to run across him in the prison dress. I quite tremble when I come near a lot of them now, for fear maybe I'd recognise him among them."

"Yes," murmured the girl, softly, "that would be very painful for both of you. We must trust it may never happen. But come in, won't you?" she continued, as they arrived at the cottage.

A very picturesque dwelling was that of Captain Holdershed, a pretty little one-storied cottage, half smothered in jas-

mine, passion flower, and Virginia creeper. The little garden that separated it from the road was gay with flowers, and the walks, grass plots, and borders kept with scrupulous neatness. The dining parlour on the right was fitted up with table, side-board, chairs, &c., of Spanish mahogany, not your gimerack modern article, but mahogany dark as night, and shining like patent leather. To the left was the sitting-room—not drawing-room, please to bear in mind. A comfortably furnished room enough, with divers easy-chairs, and a huge old-fashioned sofa. A modest book-case contained a supply of somewhat old-fashioned literature. The Waverley Novels, those of Marryatt (much prized by the Captain these last), the Vicar of Wakefield, Burns, Scott's poems and Campbell's, Dibden's songs, a few odd volumes of the Spectator, &c. But the room contained no piano, for

the best of all reasons, there was no one to make use of it had it been there. Nor were there any feminine frivolities, in the shape of work littered about the tables. Crochet, tatting, and embroidery were to Jennie as the mysteries of Eleusis. But there was a ball of twine, a mesh, and a netting needle on the mantelpiece; a half-tied fly, and one of Dickens's novels lay on the little table in the window. A couple of fishing-rods reclined in one corner of the room, and a landing-net in another. A small glazed sailor's hat, with a blue ribbon, hung against the wall, while vases of fresh flowers were everywhere. A few prints, chiefly of a nautical description, decorated the walls, interspersed here and there with an unframed chart or two—reminiscence to the Captain of some voyage of years gone by. Such is Jennie's bower, into which, tossing off

her neat boating straw hat, she now ushers Mr. Weaver.

Jennie is somewhat undecided in her own mind as to whether to confide to her visitor that she has good reason to suppose Dainty Ellerton is in the neighbourhood. Nance's visions and dreams are nothing new to Jennie. She has been the confidante of many such, but she believes that upon this occasion Nance has really seen Dainty, and that it is no vague whim of her imagination; still, thinks Jennie, it is quite possible he does not want his presence in these parts to be generally known, and quick-witted Jennie does not deem her open-hearted admirer just the person to intrust a secret to. Better keep such knowledge to herself, she thinks—at all events, for the present. And then suddenly it flashes across the girl that he may be here to endeavour to communicate with his imprisoned brother. A Portland-bred

lass like Jennie is quite aware of the illicit traffic carried on with the prisoners. She knows that there are those on the island who, compelled by the activity of the coast-guard and revenue officers to abandon the more daring and open smuggling of their youth, console themselves with this petty similitude of it, and turn questionable pennies, which they term honest, by the conveying of letters and divers other contraband articles to those within the prison walls, whose friends enable them to pay royally for such luxuries. All this glances through Jennie's mind, in less time than it has taken me to write it. Her heart thrills with exultation as she whispers to herself, if this is so, he *will want me*.

Mr. Weaver, albeit he has contemplated the lady of his love for some minutes with mute admiration, is by no means addicted to such taciturn worship ; on the contrary, he is

a most loquacious adorer, and now breaks silence with—"Troth, Miss Jennie, there's a dumbness come over you. It's may be you're thinking of how cruel you have been to me lately. If you could but imagine how much sweeter it is to give than to refuse, and how much more becoming a yes is to your pretty lips than a negative."

"What again, and so soon, sir!" laughed Jennie, while she admonished him with her forefinger. "Don't you know you've no business to get in earnest again for three weeks yet."

"Och, faith!" exclaimed Mr. Weaver, laughing, "who could make love by the almanac? By me soul, I suppose you'd have me only ask your consent when the moon's at the full. It'd be a mighty bad compliment to be paying you."

"How so?"

"Well, they do say," rejoined Tim, his eyes dancing with devilment, "that weak-headed folks are not just responsible for their actions those times."

"Mr. Weaver," cried Jennie, "I see it all now. It's only when you're not quite yourself that you go so far. Ah," she continued, clasping her hands in mock anguish, "to think that I have but one admirer, and that, by his own confession, even he's a lunatic."

"Arrah, Miss Jennie, you know better, it's only funning I am. By the rock of Cashel, I am in downright earnest!"

Again the laughter pealed from the girl's lips as she exclaimed, "Undone, undone! It's only funning he is, in downright earnest."

"If you mean laughing at everything I say," responded Tim, tartly, "maybe the sooner I'm gone the better."

"Nonsense," said Jennie, "you know you're never angry with me. If I have offended I ask pardon;" and as she spoke she rose and dropped him a curtsey. "Will that do, sir?"

"Ah, don't tease," was the good-humoured Irishman's reply; but at this instant fell upon their ears the noise of wheels, and above the noise of the wheels rose gruesome nautical invective, succeeded again by a deep bass voice trolling out in sonorous tones,

" 'There was little Tom Linstock, of Dover,
Got killed, and left Polly in pain;
Poll cried, but her grief was soon over,
And then she got married again.' "

"Now then, you swab, who the, &c., &c., told you to lie-to——"

"Jasmine Cottage, Captain," replied the flyman, touching his hat.

"'Spose it is—'spose it is Jas'm Cottage; what of that, sir?" demanded the veteran, fiercely. "Gentlemen don't always want

to go home. Want to cool my head a lile. Go on, you white-faced, 'sumptive-looking, shiny-hatted son of a grampus!"

The gallant mariner was seated in an open carriage, without his hat, his face beaming, and occasionally mopping the perspiration from his brows with a huge silken bandana, while ever and anon he gesticulated violently with his telescope.

"Mean to mut'ny?" said the Captain. "Got hold wrong man to stan' zat sort o' thing. Make sail, or by everlastin' what call it, I'll—I'll——"

And here the bibulous old gentleman threatened his contumacious coachman fiercely with his spy-glass.

"Oh, come out, Mr. Weaver. He's in a very nor'-nor'-west-by-north state, indeed; we must get him in. Uncle! Uncle!" cried Jenny, as she sped down the little garden path.

"Yes, my dear," replied the Captain;
"whars matter?"

"Do come in. You're making such a noise, I'm quite ashamed of you!"

"Pretty sort o' shing, zis!" responded the veteran, from his seat in the fly, addressing an imaginary audience. "Come home li'le tired from 'tending 'portant ceremony, and a bit of impudence like you comes out, and says,

'Then drink and sing, hang pain and sorrow,
The halter was made for the neck;
He that's now——'

How's go on? Forget the rest."

"Come along inside, Captain," interposed Mr. Weaver: "I'm distressed for something to drink."

"Not-ware asked you to tea, sir," retorted the Captain, with much stateliness.

"'May we ne'er want a friend, nor a bottle to give him,'" sang Mr. Weaver, unabashed. "You old curmudgeon! D'ye

mean to say ye'll not slake the thirst that's consuming me?"

The Captain stared fiercely at his assailant for a minute or two.

"Let 'm'out," he exclaimed, at length. "You're good fellow! I like you, Misser Weaver! Not a 'mudgeon, though. Give us arm; heavy sea on. Not so young as I was."

With Mr. Weaver's assistance, the veteran was at length got into the house; an operation a little retarded by his pertinaciously endeavouring to place both the telescope and his own arm within Mr. Weaver's; and fiercely resisting any other disposition of the former article. At the doorway he paused, to point out to Mr. Weaver the folly of ever getting married, and to explain that the seeing an old friend even succumb to such pitiable weakness, had quite upset him for the afternoon.

“Shocking shing, sir! So young, and so depraved! Now, could you think of it? Made many poor fellow take to drink.

‘ Jack Junk was ill-used by Bet Crocker,
And so took to guzzling the stuff ;
Till he tum’led in old Davy’s locker,
And z’here he got liquor enough.’

I say, s’hrikes me, Misser Weaver, we want someshing to drink. Jenny!—Jenny, I say! Branny and warrer.”

“Nonsense, uncle!” returned his niece.
“You don’t want any more, you can’t want any more, and you shan’t have any more.”

“Well, by ——!” cried the Captain, rising, “I’ll break the blank, blank “cup-board open if you don’t gi’e me key!”

“Hist, Miss Jennie!” whispered the wily Irishman. “Best let him have one more tumbler; he’ll be no further trouble to you then.”

The girl took Mr. Weaver’s advice, and at once produced the spirit-case and a carafe

of fresh water. As Mr. Weaver had predicted, the old gentleman got tranquil immediately, and after a portentous gulp at a very mahogany-looking tumbler he had mixed, exclaimed,

"Snug and comfortable now, eh? Tell you all about 'mazing accident I saw this morning. Just wait till I light my pipe."

But this was not quite so easy. Putting a long clay pipe between his lips, the captain lit a piece of paper, and holding it some two or three inches off the bowl, commenced to puff with great gravity; after about half a minute, he threw the paper into the grate, and considering his pipe all aglow, although the flame and tobacco had of course never come into contact, commenced smoking with much solemnity.

"Tell you now 'bout this 'mazing accident," puff, puff. "Cussed thing's gone

out," and the veteran, having lit another piece of paper, proceeded to go through the above ceremony again. "Tell you all 'bout it now," he remarked at length, puffing with great vigour at the still unlit pipe. "I had just walked down to the pier as a lugger came in. Well, as she rounded—don't know what 'shevil's matter with the pipe," and once more the veteran solemnly lit a piece of paper, and holding it about half a foot from the bowl, puffed till he was black in the face.

Mr. Weaver could stand it no longer, but burst into a tremendous guffaw. The captain contemplated this outbreak with a fixed stare for some seconds. Slowly it began to dawn upon his mind that he was the cause of Mr. Weaver's mirth. From blank astonishment his features gradually changed into an expression of fierce indignation. Suddenly raising the offending pipe, he

brought it down with a crash upon the table, and as it splintered into fifty pieces, exclaimed, angrily,

“What the devil are you laughing at, you blank, blank 'pertinent puppy. Never see a gentleman before with a pipe that wouldn't draw?”

It was in vain Mr. Weaver attempted to apologize; the veteran was not to be appeased. Gulping down the remainder of his brandy and water at a draught, and growling like distant thunder, out of which such phrases as “'sulted in my own house,” “impudent jackanapes,” &c., were only to be distinguished, with erratic steps the captain sought his own room.

For a few seconds Jennie and Mr. Weaver sat silently listening to the receding grumbling of the storm, and when suddenly fell upon their ears “Jack Junk was ill-used by Bet Crocker,” followed by the angry slam

of the ancient mariner's door, they both broke into a burst of uncontrollable laughter.

"Poor uncle," said Jennie at last, "I ought not to laugh at him, and it isn't often, Mr. Weaver, as you know, that he gets as bad as he is to-night. I never saw him so unmanageable."

"Faith I'll go bail he's quiet enough now till morning, and so will wish you good night," replied Mr. Weaver.

The girl sat for some time after she was left alone, musing upon this unlooked-for appearance of Dainty Ellerton. What could have brought him back to these parts, unless her conjecture was right?

"And if it is," she murmured softly, "I shall see him again. Yes, he will have need of me now. I could put him in the way of what he will want to learn. It will be very sweet even to see him again, although Frank,

my darling, you must never know how I have thought of you all these long months; how I—" and blushing to the roots of her bonnie dark tresses, Jennie jumped up, leaving her half whispered sentence unfinished.

CHAPTER V

· FLIGHT OF LAROOM.

MR. LAROOM left the Westminster Courts literally gnashing his teeth with rage and despair upon the termination of Maurice Ellerton's trial. Little likely he would omit to attend that. True, a ferocious gleam of exultation thrilled his soul as he heard that dread sentence passed upon the man who had beaten him like a hound, whom he deemed his successful rival in Rose Fielding's affections. But all that elaborate scheme of aggrandizement and revenge, which he had concocted with so much care, was blown to the winds.

The cobwebs he had been spinning these four years past were brushed away in that one hour ; all the money he had accumulated was invested in these mortgages, of which the deeds were but waste paper. If he enjoyed the luxury of revenge upon Maurice Ellerton, yet he had purchased it at the price of his own ruin ; while as for Miss Fielding, she had slipped scatheless through his vindictive fingers.

Ruined utterly, and worse than ruined ! For Rolf Laroom had signed an agreement by which he made himself liable for that ten thousand pounds which his worthy friend, Mr. Simmonds, had advanced on those forged deeds, in the event of their not proving good legitimate security. The other fifteen he had raised elsewhere. He had laughed at the extreme caution of Mr. Simmonds at the time ; he had no doubt then but the investment was genuine and

advantageous ; still the ever-sceptical Simmonds, whose life had been passed in making capital of the necessities of his fellows, saw clearly that this money was an urgent requirement with Laroom. He also had deemed the investment perfectly sound, or he would never have embarked in it. But he saw also that Laroom was in pressing need of his assistance, and therefore resolved to make assurance trebly sure that he should run no risk of being a loser by the transaction.

Mr. Simmonds knew perfectly well that Ellerton & Co. would wind up very respectably—that in the long run the creditors would be paid in full—and considered that this hold upon Laroom was quite worth having. After Maurice Ellerton's testimony, he began to think this additional security of not much greater account than those forged deeds upon which he had ad-

vanced his ten thousand pounds. But if ever there was a man little likely to submit quietly to such a loss, it was Mr. Simmonds. In his own cold-blooded way he was as remorselessly vindictive as Rolf Laroom himself. He cared for nothing but money. What money would buy, bring, or produce, was all a blank to Mr. Simmonds, except in one thing—to wit, that money properly turned made more money. It was his god, and he worshipped none other. Rich!—he lived most sparingly and unostentatiously. Life had no luxuries, no joys, no sympathies for him; the money article and his business letters his sole reading; the turmoil of the City his Eden. The man was a mere hard, passionless, money-making machine, to be touched only through his pocket; impassible, indifferent to the sufferings of his fellows; equally deaf to their joys, to their miseries; dealing out charity

neither to himself nor his neighbours—a devout worshipper of the “golden calf,” and steadfast contemner of all other gods but that.

Such is the man whom Rolf Laroom has unwittingly stricken through the one weak joint in his cynical armour.

The comfortable house in Manchester Square is abandoned, for though the creditors of Ellerton and Co. had refrained from interfering with his privacy, Mr. Simmonds had no such scruples. He had swooped down like a hawk upon all tangible property that he could discover of his quondam friends', and was even anxious to attach his person, with the laudable view of wringing from him whether he possessed yet undiscovered resources.

Singular the Nemesis that has overtaken Laroom. He is skulking in obscure lodgings, even as the man he had lured to his ruin

skulked but a few weeks previously. Rolf Laroom is close pressed and well-nigh at bay. He dare hardly show himself in the day-time, lest some of the myrmidons Mr. Simmonds has evoked should pounce upon him.

He sits gloomily in his dingy lodgings in Lambeth, musing over his lot generally, glancing with retrospective eye over the game he has played and lost.

"Yea," he mutters, "it was well thought out too ; there wasn't a blot in it that I could see. If I had to work it all over again, I could not do otherwise. Who could count upon his committing perjury in that fashion at the finish ? For that he did perjure himself, I'd stake my existence ; the old gentleman's signature was genuine enough. It was a deep idea ! I wonder who put it into his head ? I suppose he thought it out. Didn't make much odds to him whether he was

convicted of embezzlement with forgery or without. I should think penal servitude for life rather opened his eyes. Still he saved his cousin's fortune, and knocked down mine. It was a great conception," muttered Laroom : " whoever thought of it, and, to do him justice, he never blenched."

A man like Laroom could look with some admiration at the audacity of the villainy that had checkmated him. Whether he is right or not in his estimate of Maurice Ellerton's testimony, who shall say ? That knowledge can be come at only through Maurice's own confession if it be so, and Maurice has never opened his lips to human being on the subject since he swore to the forgeries.

Rolf Laroom is oppressed with doubts about his own future. His funds are getting low, and he can see no immediate means of replenishing them. There is plenty of hardihood and self-reliance in the man. He is

not of the kind that sit gazing vacantly into the grate when they should be up and doing. A man of resource, of schemes, of energy, of work. He may execrate his luck, look bitterly back upon his life's toil, which has all ended in ruin ; but there is no want of determination about commencing again ; and with his shrewd head and utter unscrupulousness with regard to the making of money, there is little doubt about his being soon once more in the way of doing so in some shape. What, then, it may be asked, paralyses his energies just now? Simply this—Rolf Laroom is conscious that he has put himself utterly in the power of a bigger scoundrel than himself. He knows that as soon as he got a little business together, Simmonds would descend upon him ruthless and unappeasable, stripping him to the last shilling.

His situation is analogous to that of the hard

working woman with a profligate husband in the dim back-ground—one who sells up the home she has got together with such infinite toil, at uncertain but constantly recurring periods.

Mr. Laroom feels nonplussed. With this terrible dead-weight around his neck how is he to start again in this country? How is he without capital to start elsewhere? In London he feels pretty sure there are people who would advance him a small sum to begin again with, but in London is Simmonds, representative of the daughters of the horse leech. Relentless, unsparing, and thirsting for gold. Watchful, cynical, and suspicious, Simmonds would insist upon plucking him long before he grew plump, for fear he might take flight to foreign parts. What a fool he was to sign that agreement; but when he did so, he looked upon it as the merest form—an instrument that never

could come into play against him. A very ominous instrument, as far as he is concerned, just now. It is a pretty piece of retributive justice, that this hawk of the city should have unwittingly fallen into the clutches of a bolder, stronger, more rapacious bird of prey than himself; that he should be cowering in the purlieus of Lambeth to escape from the talons, even as he intended his victims should be hiding from his own marauding claws. When the wolf throttles the fox, the fox meets with scant sympathy in his death-throes, I ween.

Again and again does Rolf Laroom turn over in his mind what he is to do. Would it be better, he thinks, to meet the insatiable Simmonds boldly, and try to come to terms with him? But Laroom shivers as he recollects what grace he has seen accorded by that money-making machine to impecunious creditors. He has smiled in days gone by

at the merciless dealing of this Shylock, but there is little to smile at when Shylock craves his bond from yourself.

"No," he thinks, "if I see Simmonds I'm his slave for life. He knows well my brains are worth his while to buy. He would come to terms, but I should have to subscribe to such terms that nothing but his death could break my chains. I know him too well. I must fly England and begin again elsewhere, almost penniless though it be."

Then he falls to musing again. How would it have been with him had he been loyal partner to Ellerton & Co.? The firm, though somewhat on the decline, was very far from being a rotten concern when he first came into it. Had he but thrown as much energy and shrewdness into the business as he had into his own outside speculations, the house would probably have been

thriving yet. And he had meant to do so at first. A blow from a child's hand, and the rejection of what he was pleased to term his love, had turned the whole current of his being. Instead of toiling to sustain that rickety mercantile edifice, he had worked only to destroy it. Well, the crash had come and buried him in it. He, who deemed himself perfectly safe, who had laid by his individual nest egg, and pictured himself rising jauntily from the dust and *débris* of the old house, and commencing a thriving business on his own account, was overwhelmed in its fall. "Yes," he thought at length, "it's all over with me in England; I must get away to America; there must be plenty of openings for a man like me out there. If what the papers tell us of the New York Exchange be true, I think I might do something on that——"

Most decidedly, if the sensational ac-

counts of "corners" in gold and "corners" in Erie, &c., be facts, Rolf Laroom does seem pre-eminently calculated to become a shining light and successful financier in the purlieus of King William Street. On one point only could one have misgivings about his future career—whether, even, he could be trusted to hold his own among those very "'cute" speculators.

Mr. Laroom's mind was made up. He had determined to go to New York, but he was quite aware that would require some little manœuvring. Simmonds was ophi-dian in disposition, and, like the boa-constrictor, seldom allowed the escape of a victim.

Still Laroom was subtle of his kind, and though he had little doubt that the mail-train for Liverpool was watched, fancied he would run little risk by an ordinary one. The result proved the correctness of his prognos-

tications, and he arrived in Liverpool unmolested. There he put up at a quiet inn not very far from the quay, and, having taken his passage, quietly awaited the day of embarkation.

The generality of individuals who have strong private reasons for shunning publicity regarding their departure for foreign lands, fall into the mistake of going on board the steamer they have selected for that purpose at the last moment. Fatal error! It is precisely at that time that the eyes and faculties of the police are most awake; it is then that every passenger is most carefully scrutinised, if they have reason to suppose there is amongst them one whom it is their mission to lay hands upon. Rolf Laroom thoroughly comprehended the folly of such procedure, and went on board his ship at a somewhat early hour, and quietly retreating to his berth, remained there till they were

clear of the Medway. He had good cause, for the Liverpool police had received their orders concerning him, and had they chanced to discover him, his trip to America would have been postponed indefinitely.

From the pages of this history Mr. Laroom now disappears finally. He met with varied success upon his first start in New York, but in process of time became a sleek, unctuous citizen, a prominent member of the Tammany ring, a steady attendant at church—was known to have been in very profitable “corners” of divers description, and, in the language of the West, to have “made his pile.”

Men’s merits do not always meet their deserts in this world, nor do the evil-doers pay invariably the penalty of their misdeeds; audacity, hypocrisy, and dishonesty, at times, go about clothed in very comfortable broadcloth, and in their own carriages. And,

alas! it is to be feared, very little troubled with the gnawings of conscience or remorse.

CHAPTER VI.

JENNIE'S WISH FULFILLED.

JENNIE HOLDERSHED has gone on dreaming day-dreams, and drinking in stories of Dainty Ellerton, such as are only told by a man who narrates the exploits of the hero of his school-days; and Jennie can no longer disguise from herself that she feels a passion for this wandering hussar, that is all unwarranted, as far as anything he has ever said to her is concerned. She does not quite know how it has all come about even now. She liked him well enough in the old fishing days. Nay, Jennie, searching her heart fiercely and scornfully, will admit "very

much;" but she didn't love him in those times. Very positive of that is Jennie. How is it, then, that mentioning this man's name makes her cheeks flush and her veins tingle? How is it that her ears are so greedy to drink in aught relating to him, that she craves to talk of him, that she can sit for hours while Mr. Weaver narrates some one or other of Dainty's boyish triumphs or escapades, with all the fervour and enthusiasm of his excitable temperament? She never tires of listening to such histories, and is kinder than usual to the Irishman, when in his loyal devotion to the hero of his boyhood he winds up his story with a peroration of honest eulogy. Not a girl either was Jennie to let her heart go lightly out of her keeping. She takes shame to herself even now that it is so. How is it that this man, who has never wooed her, has

taken such hold of her fancy, leaving her to confess sadly that

“ Between the sunset and the sea
My love laid hands and lips on me ? ”

It is the old paradox—those who woo earnestly often woo vainly ; while those who love lightly, are wept for and mourned. We are always rejecting the grapes to our hand, in our wild endeavours to clutch those out of reach. What put Dainty Ellerton into her head ? He had never whispered love speeches in her ear ; and yet Jennie owns sorrowfully to herself that his turn has been as well served as if he had spent all those bright midsummer days in such passionate murmurings.

“ I am a fool,” she murmured. “ I hate myself that I cannot tear him from my heart. I despise myself for so loving him. He ! who has probably never wasted a thought upon me—who, if he has, thinks

of me only as a girl who served to wile away the idle hours of his sojourn here. And yet I cannot blame him. It is no fault of his. Ah! thrice-stricken fool, what madness possessed you to give your love unasked, unsought!" and the hot tears stood in Jennie's eyes as she thought how that love might be scorned, or at least rejected, should sign of it ever escape her. No! he must never learn it. He was in the neighbourhood now; she must keep close watch on tongue and eye, to see they did not betray her. It is easy for some women to disguise their love. With them it flows in placid streams, that never overflow their banks; but with their wilder, more passionate sisters, it foams and frets, till at times it passeth their control, and they find, alas! how

"Lightly shall a woman's will slip out,
The foolish little winged will of her,
Through cheek or eye, when tongue is charmed asleep."

They have more stormy times these last, doubtless. They are liable to such shipwreck of their affections as those even-tempered daughters of Eve never run risk of; but, on the other hand, they taste such delirium of happiness as those others cannot hope to imagine.

Jennie wanders, a morning or two after she has heard of Dainty Ellerton's re-appearance, along the banks of the trout-stream that she has so often fished in his company. The girl, however, carries no rod with her upon this occasion, but strolls listlessly along, wrapped in her own reflections. She feels sure that she will see him before long, and anticipates that meeting with mixed sensations of pleasure and pain. To a woman of Jennie's warm passionate temperament, the idea of once more standing face to face with the man she loves is clothed with infinite sweetness. But then comes the bitter

reflection, that the man she loves is not her lover. She turns over and over again in her mind his every look, his every word, and gathers no crumb of consolation from doing so. She cannot cheat herself into the belief that he has ever manifested a sign of affection towards her. She recalls his last good-bye; she understands now how it was that she felt so angered at his indifference, though she would not admit to herself at the time that she had any regard for him. Ah! well, she knows better now—better, forsooth, and Jennie's face flushes as she thinks of her love given to a man who is blind and indifferent to it. Better, she thinks, those days when she could still make shift to deny it.

She wanders on, till she comes to a high hedge, which necessitates her diverging a little from the bank, in order to obtain the use of the gateway. As her hand touches the hasp, the subject of her meditations

standing suddenly before her. A low cry escapes her lips, and she trembles slightly.

"Jennie!" he exclaims, extending his hand. "I am very glad to see you. Won't you welcome me back?"

For a second or two she had scarcely noticed his outstretched hand, but his last words called her attention to it, and she shook hands silently with him.

His eyes flashed upon her, and he gazed keenly into her face for a moment, and then said,

"Pardon me, I forgot—it is possible you might prefer not meeting me again. You have doubtless heard of our disgrace."

"Frank!" cried the girl, passionately, still clinging to his hand, "how can you say such things to me? Yes, I have heard of your trouble, and no one could have been more grieved about it than I was. You might have known me better than to think

otherwise, if you had ever cared to judge me aright."

She flung his hand away from her petulantly ; for the first gust of her passion over, she felt indignant that he could have thought so meanly of her.

"Forgive me, Jennie," he replied gravely. "I know that I'm perhaps over-sensitive on this point, but I've been sorely tried. The world is apt to gather up its skirts when it encounters those with a tainted name."

She turned to him again with one of those quick gestures peculiar to herself, and looked into his face. The low, sad, sorrowful tone in which he spoke, so different from his old, easy, *nonchalant* manner, moved her strangely. And now she looked at him she was struck with his worn, haggard aspect. Dainty had felt his brother's disgrace bitterly. In his eyes Maurice was past the sympathy of all honourable men. He had sinned past all

redemption. Mrs. Ellerton and Rosie, in their pity for the offender, were morally blind to the enormity of the offence. But it was not so with Dainty. He grieved sincerely that the brother he so loved should have so fallen. But he saw his crime in all its nakedness and deformity. He glossed it over not an iota.

Jennie looked at him for some seconds in silence ; he was switching the tops off a thistle idly with his cane. Suddenly she caught his hands in hers, and, as the tears welled into her eyes, exclaimed softly, " I am truly sorry for you—you ought to have known that I should ever sympathise with you in trouble."

He bent forward and laid his lips lightly on her brow. " Thanks," he said. " Do you remember what you said when you bade me good-bye?"

" Yes," she replied, gently, still holding

his hand in hers, "but I am sorry for my words now."

"I hope not; for I have much need of your help, Jennie."

"Ah!" she cried, with an impatient movement of her head, and dropping his hands, "why will you always misunderstand me? It sounds as if I had wished trouble might come to you, and I didn't mean that."

"No, hardly that, I believe; but, Cassandra-like, you hoped we might never meet till I had need of you. They were words of prophecy. We meet again, and I want your help."

"I guessed it would be so," replied Jennie, "as soon as I heard you were in these parts again. You wish to establish a communication with your brother?" Dainty bent his head silently. "No difficulty about that. If I have never been employed in that nefarious traffic myself, I know where

to put my hand on plenty who will do your bidding, if you only pay for it."

"Thanks," replied Frank Ellerton; "I want a letter conveyed inside, that is all."

"Is that to be all?" inquired the girl, in a quick fierce whisper. "If you have money to spend, won't you try for more than that? If brother of mine were there, I'd have him out at all hazards."

"Curious," thought Dainty; "here is another who deems Maurice's escape quite feasible." And then Dainty reflected that Jennie Holdershed's opinion carried some weight with it. Born on the Rock, and conversant with every hole and crannie of it, she should be some judge of whether such an enterprise had any chance of success.

"I doubt that is not to be accomplished," he replied quietly.

"Not to be accomplished!" exclaimed the girl vehemently. "No! not unless he be bold

of heart and cunning of hand. Not unless he can watch patiently and untiringly for his opportunity. But to such the chance comes always. Mark me, Frank. Remember what I tell you, and act upon it. Those who bide their time can generally escape from Portland prison if they have courage. But it is the escaping from Portland Rock afterwards that is the great difficulty; they are always retaken."

"Then there is little advantage to them in breaking prison," he replied moodily. "They are doubtless punished for such misdemeanour when captured."

"Yes; and yet it is possible that a man might get clear off, if he had but friends outside to help him."

"How so?" asked Dainty.

"Because the only chance of getting off the Rock is by water. Those who have got out of prison so far have never had

friends to help them in that way. But if they had known where to find a boat to take them off, if they could have counted upon a cutter lying off in the West Bay, the probabilities are they might have made good their escape."

Dainty was getting interested in the conversation.

"But did that never occur to any of them, think you?" he asked.

"Doubtless," replied Jennie; "but all that requires not only friends outside, but friends with considerable means. The poor wretches who have broken out so far have had nothing but their own resources to depend upon; they have had but very imperfect knowledge of the locality besides; and yet with all that against him, one of them did actually get off the Rock, and as far as Dorchester, before he was recaptured."

"I recollect it. I was quartered at

Dorchester at the time. We must have some further talk about this, Jenny ; but, in the meanwhile, I want this letter sent to Maurice."

"Give it me," replied the girl. "I'll tell Nance—you recollect her—to go over to Portland, and see about it. The imp had plenty of that sort of work before her father settled at Upway, some three years back. They are Portlanders bred and born, like myself."

"Yes, I remember Nance ; but, Jenny, the girl has conceived a strange aversion to me. I think she'd probably do me a bad turn in this business."

"Not if I send her. She'd be true as steel to me, whatever it might be ; and, with her elfish cunning, she's a very reliable messenger"

"If I lack trust in her, I put implicit confidence in you, so do as you

think best about it. How is the Captain?"

"Not one whit more reconciled to kid gloves than when you were here last. He has been in a very nor'-west-by-north state lately; and I took advantage of his being rather unwell, the other morning, to administer a severe phillipic with his tea and toast, about the ultimate fate of wine-bibbers, and to point out where nor'-westers were likely to carry him."

"And I trust he was penitent," said Dainty, laughing.

"Very much so. Excused himself by saying that seeing an old friend spliced was the thirstiest and most affecting sight on earth (he had been at a wedding, you must know), and that henceforth he intended to avoid all such exciting ceremonies."

"Which resolution, let us trust, he may keep to," rejoined Dainty.

"Oh, it don't much matter," said Jennie,

with a quick glance from under her lashes, and a half-comic elevation of the eyebrows. "Uncle sees such sad, marvellous, and thrilling sights through that glass of his, that he is never without an excuse for taking something; as he says, just to support the nervous system—"stiffners," he calls them. He says the wickedness of his fellow-creatures makes him feel limp."

"Ah!" returned Ellerton, laughing, "whether it's weddings or funerals, it comes to the same thing with him."

Jennie nodded.

"Do you know," she said, after a slight pause, as she walked slowly along the edge of the river, "that I have been imparting the fishing lore you taught me, to an old friend of yours—Mr. Weaver."

"What, Tim? Yes, his regiment arrived just before I left. I told him he'd have to take to fishing here."

"Well, a pretty mess he made of it to begin with; but when I found he was a friend of yours, I took compassion on him."

"That would go a long way towards reconciling him to the pursuit," rejoined Dainty, smiling, to whom the susceptibility of Mr. Weaver was well known.

"What do you mean?" inquired Jennie, sharply.

"My dear Jennie, don't be angry; but my friend Tim's devotion to your sex is notorious. I'm quite sure he has paid due homage to your charms."

"No more, sir, than a tolerably good-looking girl might lay claim to," retorted Jennie, somewhat mendaciously, for she is aware that the Irishman's devotion is exceptional.

"There's no doubt Tim Weaver speaks highly of trout-fishing as a 'diversion,'" observed Dainty, rather amused.

The blood flew to Jennie's temples, and her grey eyes lightened, as she replied, rapidly:

"He was not so much wrapped up in himself as to fail to discover that his companion was worth looking at. He has the gallantry of his nation, and is not called upon to put on the affected manners of a dragoon."

Dainty started—he knew that this girl had a feeling for him when he was last down in those parts, and he saw now that it still existed. He gazed at her with no little curiosity, but she turned her head away from him, and kept her eyes steadfastly on the ground. For the first time he was struck with her tall, graceful figure; with the rich masses of her brown hair, with the long dark lashes that now veiled the flashing grey eyes. For the first time he noticed her easy supple walk, and his eye was attracted to the well-

turned ankle that ever and anon peeped forth from beneath her blue serge walking-dress. He had thought of her vaguely before as a good-looking girl, but he awoke now to the consciousness that she was a very handsome one.

As I have said before, he was a man strangely indifferent to feminine attractions. It was not that he did not mingle in women's society, because he did a good deal, until his brother's crime made him so keenly sensitive regarding all society. But as long as he found a woman agreeable, Dainty had always been curiously blind to her personal attractions. He would spend an evening in pleasant talk with a lady either plain or *passée*, would yawn at times when one whose beauty was beyond dispute had condescended to put forth all her powers of enchantment for his subjugation; had monopolized the belle of the ball for half an hour at others,

and yet been all unconscious that she was such. There was no awakening enthusiasm with regard to woman's beauty in Dainty ; "good-looking" was the utmost it was possible to extract from him. Yet he made one exception, and that was, a lady with soft grey hair, and turned of fifty. It was his mother.

And now for the first time in his life Dainty is musing seriously on a girl's looks, and the more he gazes stealthily at Jennie Holdershed, the more he awakens to the consciousness of what a handsome girl she is.

Rather awkward, he thinks, this last speech of hers. He feels conscious of having been somewhat remiss in the matter of attention to Jennie all last summer. She might almost have been a man as far as he was concerned, so completely did he regard her as a mere sister of the angle, to whom he had been first attracted by seeing her pursue her sport in base, poaching, unorthodox fashion

—to wit, *with a worm*. In mere compassion for her ignorance had he first introduced himself to her, and had felt, in the beginning, much wrath because she failed to carry out his instructions. Latterly he had condescended to own that she would throw a good fly with practice. Still, despite his neglect, Dainty is quite conscious that he has some hold over this girl. Her very petulance is proof of it.

They had walked on in silence for some time, absorbed in the above reflections : it had never occurred to Dainty to break it. His imperturbability is one secret of his success in society. The necessity for speaking when we have nothing to say, of which most of us are so painfully conscious, never disturbed Dainty Ellerton. Much conversation connected with the weather, and similar inanities, takes its rise from that morbid alarm that characterises us when a pause

takes place in the small talk in which we have embarked. The feverish impatience of speech that distinguishes "the morning caller," is familiar to most of us.

Jennie can bear it no longer. She is conscious that her tongue waxed bitter in her last remark.

"Have I offended you, Mr. Ellerton?" she exclaims, somewhat brusquely, "that you have nothing to say to me?"

"Not at all," returned Dainty quietly. "I was thinking, on the contrary, how it was that I had offended you."

"I have some right to feel angry!" cried the girl, as she stopped and looked him proudly in the face. "You jeer at me because a friend of yours holds me in higher esteem than you do—because another can admire one whom you regard so lightly. I don't want to boast, Frank, but there are many who call me handsome,

though you don't. You need not sneer because Mr. Weaver likes fishing with me; there are plenty would be glad to take his place, believe me."

"I have no doubt of it. If I smile at the havoc you have made with Tim Weaver's heart, it is simply because I know his besetting weakness, and have so often seen him succumb without a tithe of his present excuse."

Dainty uttered the last words gravely and pointedly. Jennie cast a quick, jealous look at him as he finished, to see if she might detect any sign of mockery in his face; but his quiet gaze of unmistakeable admiration made her drop her eyes hastily. She knew that he was no longer blind to her personal attractions.

"Good-bye," she said, at length. "I will see about this letter. You will come

and look at us before long," and she extended her hand.

He clasped it closely, and made a half effort to draw her to him ; but she extricated herself quickly from his grasp, and, with a sharp, petulant nod, sped away home.

CHAPTER VII.

NEWS FROM WITHOUT.

MAURICE ELLERTON, having been duly furnished by the astute Mr. Blades with writing materials, has written a letter to his brother, which that worthy has undertaken to forward by what he facetiously designates "the underground mail." At the expiration of a couple of days, he whispers to Maurice that he has done so. Very sanguine and hopeful is the latter upon receiving this assurance; and, before a week has elapsed, he is impatiently expecting a reply. He questions Mr. Blades, whenever opportunity offers, eagerly

on this subject, and chafes when that experienced criminal preaches patience to him.

"You see," said Blades, "our mail ain't quite as regular as the ordinary post. Then, again, the chap you've wrote to, he ain't up to the move. He'd probably not be at the address you gave. He ain't expectin' to hear from you, and the letter might have to follow him about a bit. But don't you be down-hearted, he'll be awake to the underground post after a little, and then you'll hear regular."

Still, if Maurice fretted at the delay, yet the mere sending of that letter had done him good. He had something—not much, it may be; but nevertheless, something—to look forward to. It had aroused the man from the leaden apathy into which he had sunk.

When life has fallen for us into a dull, hopeless uniformity, it is surprising with

what interest we can expect the slightest incident that threatens to trouble its stagnant waters.

Maurice rose every day, now, with the possibility of receiving a letter. True, the days seemed to bring nothing but disappointment; yet was there not the morrow which might make atonement for all such miscarriage of expectations? And what was it, after all, that he watched and waited for? Only a letter. For as yet no other scheme possessed Maurice's brain. He simply craved to hear from those dear to him, oftener than the prison regulations allowed. Twice a year is not much to receive intelligence of those we love. That was all Maurice was at present entitled to. Time and good conduct might produce further indulgence in this respect. In the meanwhile, how sluggish were the wings of time!

“Only a letter!” three words that may mean so much—may mean so little. Hearts have grown sick, and eyes waxed dim waiting for only a letter. Cheeks have blanched, and tongues have faltered, as day after day they sought the post-office for only a letter, and went wearily homewards after the official’s curt reply of “Not to-day, ma’am.” A *poste-restante* is a painful study to a philosopher. It is not to be comprehended in a day. You must hover about it for weeks. After a time you will know the anxious faces as well as the clerks. There are the travellers, who rush up and claim their letters, tolerably indifferent as to whether they find any or not—who thrust them, after one hurried glance at the superscription, into their pockets, and go their way. It is not of these we would take note. Mark that pale woman, neatly dressed, but whose attire shows palpably

that she fights a dour, silent struggle with the world. Listen to her soft, quivering inquiry; see her head bowed meekly as that glib negative to which, alas! poor soul, she is too well accustomed, meets her ear. See this trim, coquettish damsel, with cheeks all aglow, and the light of love in her eyes; how she blushes as she stammers forth her inquiry—how she clutches her treasure, and how her lips part in a rippling smile as she trips lightly away! . Ha! my friend here I think we all know. Coat rather closely buttoned up; hat a trifle shiny, and worn a little on one side—yes, evidently the gentleman who is always expecting remittances. Freely translated, that means he has sent out borrowing circulars to all his friends and acquaintances, and has just looked in to see if anything has come of them. But enough of the *poste-restante* of general life; it is with the *poste-restante*

of Portland prison that we have to do.

Mr. Blades, making his way, under the auspices of a warder, towards the blacksmith's shop—scene of his daily labours—and meditatively reflecting that he should like to have done the breakfast he has lately disposed of, about twice more, suddenly murmurs to himself, as his eyes rove restlessly around :

“Hum ! something from without. Wonder what it is? Just at present, I think a Bologny sausage would be the thing I should like best to drop upon.”

The air of Portland is keen ; Mr. Blades's appetite is large ; and the consequence is, that gentleman is very far from satisfied with the dieting.

“It ain't the quality I complains of,” he remarks, pathetically ; “but what's the use of supposing a first-class burglar eats no more nor a sparrow? It's a mockery !

It's a mere keeping us alive, that's what it is! Wait till I get out, and see if I support a liberal Government again, that's all! I'm all for Mr. D'Israeli, the Conservative lot, and the old rations. If anybody would stand anything in this here inhospitable establishment, I'd give 'em the times of Sir Joshua Jebb, and it's sorry I am he's gone."

The uninitiated would have been sorely perplexed to indicate upon what grounds Mr. Blades had so confidently announced that there was something from without awaiting him. There was apparently nobody in the quarry through which he was passing, except the various gangs of prisoners, and the warders in charge of them. Nothing to lead a bystander to suppose that an attempt to communicate with any one of the former was being made. Who was to make it? There was no one except those connected with the prison

to be seen. That is the custom of those who undertake to supply these grey-coated outcasts with surreptitious luxuries. The "good people" who provide the convicts with interdicted comforts are as sensitive about being seen as the "good people" for whom poor Nance makes such unavailing search.

But if we follow the keen, furtive glances of Mr. Blades, we shall see that they are attracted to a small heap of waste by the side of the road. Waste is the chipping and splinters that are cut from the stone in shaping it into rough blocks, after it has been raised. There are numberless heaps of such strewn on either side of the way, and it is curious why this particular pile should have such a peculiar attraction for the burglar. Wherein does it differ from any of the similar accumulations that surround it, one cannot tell; yet Mr. Blades

has no doubt that, when he gets the opportunity of lifting the top stone or two, he will find a tiny parcel or letter beneath them.

Looking more closely, one perceives a small piece of broken crockery on the summit, on which again rests a small pebble; that is the sign—more properly, one should say a sign, for there are many such, all readily comprehended by the old hands within the prison.

But although a parcel may be thus deposited—though the spot where it lies concealed may be speedily recognised by the prisoner for whom it is intended, yet he has still to await an opportunity to possess himself of it. Bill Blades, marching with his fellows to the blacksmith's shop, admits ruefully that he does not quite see how he is to get at that heap of waste, except under the keen gaze of a warder. Were he work-

ing in the quarries, it would be simple. There is a risk, too, in delay of some other prisoner recognising the sign, and having, from the situation of his work, more favourable opportunities of finding and appropriating the parcel. Mr. Blades is far too experienced a man of the world to have any reliance on that musty old adage of "Honour among thieves."

"It might come to one all right, if it's only a letter," he mused; "but if it's anything else, the chance would be mighty poor." And though Mr. Blades has put Maurice Ellerton in the way of receiving a letter, yet his friendship does not extend so far but that he would infinitely prefer to find two or three sticks of tobacco on his own account, instead of that response for which Maurice so yearns. Such regard for one's own interests is not altogether peculiar to the confines of a prison.

Bill Blades, as he hammers and forges in the blacksmith's shop this morning, ruminates much upon how he is to find an opportunity for investigating that heap of waste, but all to no purpose. "Them warders are so plaguy officious," he mutters, querulously. "Why, if my boot-lace did happen to come undone just opposite that bit of crockery, one of 'em would be bound to stop and see how I tied it up again."

As he spoke, he was busy raking some cinders together, with which he replenished the fire. Suddenly something glittering caught his eye amongst the *débris*.

"Halloa! you're a find!" he muttered—"I'll have you." He glanced stealthily round for a moment, and saw that no notice was just then being taken of his proceedings; he stooped, and in a second a bit of wrought steel about four inches long was concealed in the garter-band of his knicker-

bockers. "That's the makings of a knife, any way," thought Mr. Blades, with a grin.

By the time the recall-bell rang he had made up his mind what to do. He saw, as he marched back to the hall, that the piece of crockery was still there. He determined to tell Maurice Ellerton about it. Maurice was working in that vicinity just now, and could, he thought, easily manage to approach the heap without attracting attention. As they file off to their respective cells for dinner, Mr. Blades, living in the same hall, has no difficulty in getting next Maurice Ellerton, and in that low tone peculiar to such places, communicates to him his discovery. Maurice's eyes gleam at the intelligence; still he listens attentively to his companion's counsels, and very emphatic is Mr. Blades upon the wisdom of taking things coolly.

"Don't you be in a flurry," says that worthy; "bide your time, and if it's a note,

why, your boot's as handy a place to stow it as any. If it's more, slip it in the garter strap of your knickerbockers, and inside the leg, mind. The warders usually run their hands down outside, when they search us as we come in from work."

To all of which, delivered in a low voice, and with almost motionless lips, Maurice promised to pay due attention. Very curious is this bated language of the prison ; characteristic of the criminals of all nations, in whatever tongue it may be couched. It is the art of modulating the voice so as to be almost beyond the knowledge of any but the person addressed, while the lips are so slightly moved, that a bystander would never suspect them of speaking. It is extraordinary how soon prisoners acquire this manner of speech, although perhaps not to be wondered at, since man has mostly a sore yearning to hold communication with

his fellows. Debarred from open conversation, he soon acquires this semi-silent tongue. Maurice Ellerton had already graduated thus far in the freemasonry of crime.

At last the dinner hour is over, the cells are once more unlocked, the prisoners pour forth in obedience to the summons, and are marched off in their respective gangs to their work. Maurice's eyes rove keenly around as they enter the east quarry, and before his party is broken off to resume their accustomed toil, he has discovered the piece of delf that Blades had described to him. His heart beats quick, although he expects but a letter. Yet how is he to get it? True, his labour takes him very near to that heap of waste, but still he will have to diverge some short distance to get to it, and the attention of the keen-eyed warder in charge would be instantly aroused at his straying

those thirty yards or so from the chain of barrows it is his lot to be employed with. It is cruelly tantalizing, but he bears the advice of his astute friend, Mr. Blades, in mind, to be patient and await his opportunity.

Three hours pass away, during which Maurice, wheeling incessant barrow-loads, is sometimes near, sometimes far away from that mysterious piece of delf. Once he found himself with an empty barrow within twenty yards of it. He lounged carelessly from his barrow: he was within six paces of it, when the stern voice of the warder called to him to keep by his work. Maurice began to despair. Help came to him in an unexpected shape. We may regret it, we may ignore it, we may even deny it; but at the bottom of our dispositions, however kept in restraint by culture and education, there still exists "the animal"—those fierce

passions which, when uncontrolled, reduce us to the level of the beasts. "The animal" at times seems to possess men of high position, as well as those who have barely risen above the brute creation. Henry VIII., and some of the Roman Emperors, are cases in point. The French Revolution (I speak of the first) offered hundreds of examples. Carrier, who inaugurated the republican wedding, is perhaps as good a type of the human tiger, broken loose, rampant, and uncontrolled, as one could mention. What cold-blooded butchery happened when Carrier went down to the Loire, we have all read.

James Carnoul, chafing in his chains at Portland, is one of these men in whom "the animal" constantly preponderates, to the utter obscuration of his reason. There are times, when the fit comes upon him, that this man is as uncontrollable as a wild beast,

and amenable to no other coercion than such as a Van Amburgh resorts to with his four-footed prototype. "Chafing in his chains" is not altogether figurative as regards Carnoul. He has arrived at the distinction of a leg iron—a band of steel riveted round the ankle, from which run two long links, the other end attached to his waist belt.

Carnoul, upon this afternoon, has one of his outbreaks. It takes a somewhat ludicrous form. He is employed at a huge crane, adjusting the slings with which to raise the cut stone on to the trucks destined to carry it away. Suddenly "the animal" moved him to clamber rapidly to the top of this crane, from which exalted position he in powerful language consigned his fellows, the prison authorities, and the world generally, to perdition. He refused positively to come down. He sat there and cursed. In

ferocious language he informed the warders that he would break the neck of any one who should presume to attempt to fetch him down. The situation was absurd. There were plenty of volunteers among the prisoners to aid the warders; but the latter were circumspect. The crane was upwards of thirty feet high, and a desperado like Carnoul might easily hurl any one approaching him to the ground. Still authority could not be defied in this wise. It was the criminal banning the representatives of the law from the summit of the gallows.

But wily men swarm up the guys connected with the crane; ropes are thrown dexterously from one to the other, and in a few minutes Carnoul is sufficiently pinioned to be approached; two or three minutes more, and handcuffed, and foaming with rage, he is marched off in the custody of the warders to the punishment cells.

This incident had naturally attracted the attention of all engaged in the quarries. Maurice saw his opportunity, and walked swiftly to the piece of delf. He turned over the two or three stones beneath it, and found a small packet wrapped up in oil-cloth. Hastily concealing it, he joined the circle who were gazing at Carnoul, and witnessed the downfall of that worthy.

Very impatient now is Maurice that work should be over. He longs to find himself locked up in his cell, that he may examine his treasure ; and never, perhaps, even when the toil had been the heaviest strain to his unaccustomed muscles, had he welcomed the sound of the recall bell so eagerly as to-night. Will he be satisfied? These much looked-for letters sometimes carry sore disappointment when they come to hand.

Steadily the numerous parties of prisoners

tramp through the quarries and disappear within the prison gate. The convict guards vanish through the black portal, and the wild grey chaos of broken stone lies silent. Not a living soul apparently amidst those pits, those heaps, those vast masses of wrought stone. The gigantic cranes loom out dark and weird in the failing light, like so many evil genii, fell guardians of the place. Suddenly from a heap of *débris* on the extreme verge of the quarry, rises an unkempt poorly-dressed girl, and stretches herself with a sense of relief. She well may, for she has passed the day there crouching, watching—her eyes ever intent on that piece of delf, or rather on the heap that she knows it is upon, for she is too far off to distinguish it.

“Well, I may go now,” she exclaims wearily. “I can tell Miss Jennie that one

of 'em's got it, anyway;" and with a shrug of her shoulders, Nance sped rapidly through the quarry, and wended her way towards Easton.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAY I SAY IT?

DAINTY ELLERTON has established himself at Weymouth, in lodgings near the harbour, and there broods much over the possibility of his brother's escape. The idea originally implanted in his mind by Miss Fielding has been fostered of late by Jennie Holdershed. He has constant interviews with Jennie, and the girl has already found that this subject has a strange fascination for him. There is perhaps a taint of the old smuggling blood in Jennie's veins. At all events, her sympathies are apt

to be with those who are in antagonism with the law. She has her own views upon the feasibility of an escape from Portland, and, as we have already seen, deems it quite practicable, providing assistance is furnished from without.

To Dainty's jaundiced mind this is rapidly becoming an affair that it behoves him to attempt at all hazards. He argues sophistically that the stain on their name will be in some measure washed out when Maurice is rescued from a felon's doom ; that, for the love he bears his mother, he is in duty bound to restore Maurice to her arms ; that even Rose Fielding looks to him to set her lover free, for that Rose is in love with his brother, Dainty has now no doubt. All these reasons, conjoined with his morbid sensitiveness to society's nods and inuendoes, have determined him to snatch Maurice, if possible, from the fate to which

the law has doomed him. This may sound unnatural, but it must be borne in mind that his brother's shame has affected Dainty Ellerton very strongly; that, in a somewhat different way, he feels it as acutely as his mother. Mrs. Ellerton can only think of the hardships that Maurice has to undergo—of the severity of his punishment. Dainty dwells more on the hopeless disgrace—on the total want of honour displayed by the brother he so looked up to.

It would be a great mistake to suppose that Dainty Ellerton's taking up his abode at Weymouth attracted any attention there. To begin with, when quartered at Dorchester, he had never much frequented the little watering-place, he had never been a loungeur of the esplanade; and even when staying there the previous year, had passed his days in the country, fishing principally. The circumstances of a trial like Maurice's

soon fade from the memory of the public ; and, moreover, although Mr. Weaver, as an officer of the Portland garrison, had chanced to discover that Maurice was an inmate of the prison, yet Weymouth was quite unaware of that fact. The grim bastille keeps its own secrets, and is chary of admitting visitors. The outside world know little about who may be amongst its fifteen hundred inmates.

Dainty Ellerton passes his days at present between roving over the Isle of Portland and strolling about the neighbourhood of Upway with Jennie. He has awoke at last to her beauty. Then the girl's genuine, honest sympathy for his trouble is inexpressibly soothing to him. He, so jealous and suspicious of the kindly attentions of society, abandons himself, with a sense of relief, to Jennie's quiet, hopeful talk, and wonders how it was he never remarked her

quick, graceful gestures before. She may not be accomplished, but she is, nevertheless, by no means uneducated, with strong common-sense, and a keen sense of fun and humour, that give much zest to her conversation. Better worth talking to, he thinks, than half the women you meet with in society. Moreover, love is apt to beget love, when the opportunity is vouchsafed it; and, without being a coxcomb, Dainty is justified in thinking that Jennie cares a good deal about him. Jennie, with her frank, impulsive manner, and her every thought reflected in her bonnie face, is not apt at concealing her feelings. She was in love with him before, and she is so sincerely sorry for him now. Her woman's wit quickly showed her how deep this wound was. She recognized at once the great change that had come over him—how the *insouciant* hussar of a year ago had changed

into a moody, suspicious, irritable man. She soothed him, amused him—more still, she acquired his confidence. Dainty spoke to her as he had never spoken yet to anyone of his brother's crime; told her, what he had never even breathed to his mother or cousin, that his present life was insupportable; that he must leave the army. Jennie listened in silence; she did think herself that it would, perhaps, be best for him to throw the old life behind him, and to start afresh in another land, but Jennie kept her thoughts to herself. She did not feel qualified to give an opinion on that subject. A preposterous piece of modesty, such as rarely hinders our acquaintance from bestowing advice upon us.

But Jennie knew what she could do. She saw what she might be to him now. She felt that it did him good to talk to her. She could combat this morbid idea that his

brother's disgrace extended to himself, though, it was true, she made little impression on this subject. Dainty would shake his head drearily, and reply,

"You don't understand the world, Jennie. Society is always ready to believe that a great criminal's connexions only want opportunity to display similar proclivities."

"Then society is unjust, and I would have none of it if I were you," retorted the girl, spiritedly.

"Society has saved me the trouble, and will have none of me," replied Dainty, with a faint smile.

This was, as we know, both unjust and untrue. Frank Ellerton's friends had been sincerely sorry for him, and had been even marked in their attentions; but Dainty had viewed all such kindness through a distorted lens, and had rejected their well-meant offices, viewing even the hearty sympathy of

his regiment with distrust. Then, again, Jennie knew that she could be of real assistance to him in communicating with his brother ; and that, if the at present somewhat undefined idea of Maurice's escape should ever take definite form, she could be of still greater use to him. Every inch of Portland was familiar to Jenny, and, what was of still more importance, every nook and cranny of its shores. From the dark rifts and caverns in the neighbourhood of the Bill to the more practicable shingle about Church Cove and the King's Pier, from treacherous Chesil Beach to the peaceful landing-places of Castletown, all were well-known to Jennie. This idea, that Maurice should break his bonds, is fermenting rapidly in two heads—heads likely to endeavour to give a practical turn to it, if they can persuade Maurice to fall into their views. In the meanwhile, clearly

the first thing to be done is to open communication with him, and discover what he has to say upon the subject.

That idea, however, will have to take possession of a third head before it has the remotest chance of being realized. Maurice is no more capable of devising an escape from the prison than an infant. Clearly, too, his getting without the walls must be of his own doing. Even Jennie, sanguine and full of schemes as she is, when she talks the matter over with Dainty, can suggest no possibility of assisting him till he shall stand outside Portland prison. That first indispensable part of the drama must be conceived and carried out from the *inside*. Is it likely that a man such as Maurice can plot and put in execution so difficult a design? The few that have broken bonds from Portland have been astute, practised criminals, and have in most cases been favoured by circum-

stances. Still, think the conspirators, we would fain know what he thinks of such a scheme.

Jennie's womanly instinct had not deceived her when she divined that Dainty would probably wish that his presence in the neighbourhood should not be known to Mr. Weaver. Still, but for fortune favouring him, it would have been almost impossible but that he should have run against that officer in the course of his constant visits to Upway. But, as it happened, Mr. Weaver had been summoned suddenly to Ireland, in consequence of the death of his father, and so that impetuous, blundering young Irishman was for the present out of the way. It would be a nice question to decide which of the two was most gratified by this fortuitous circumstance. If Dainty was nervously apprehensive of meeting Mr. Weaver, most assuredly Jennie sometimes thought how

dreadfully, poor fellow, he would have been in the way, had he been still at Portland. It was very nice to hear him sing the praises of the man she loved, when that man was far away; but when she could talk to the man himself, Jennie felt she could dispense with the chorus.

It was curious to mark the change that was rapidly stealing over the relations of these two. Only a year ago, and Dainty had indolently and carelessly accepted the girl's only too palpable admiration for himself, constantly finding fault with her, often snubbing her, often smiling at her enthusiasm: laughing at her for her wild, passionate love of the beautiful. For Jennie had a keen eye for the fair pictures of nature's painting, in which that neighbourhood abounds. She would lie on the grass drinking in the panorama of Weymouth Bay, or would stand on the dizzy verge of

the West Cliff at Portland, with the rain in her hair, and watch the fierce rollers come tumbling into the bay at her feet, while the clouds scudded and gathered fast before the tumultuous, shrieking south-west wind, as, like a petulant child, from soft sobbing and moaning, it screamed itself into a very paroxysm of passion. All these changes were very sweet to Jennie. She loved the ocean as those born by it ever do. She entered into its varied moods—could be lazy and listless as itself when the channel showed scarce a ripple; could exult when the white-crested waves came thundering against the granite cliffs, and Portland's Race was a sheet of foam. Those nursed within "boom of the billow" never forget its lullaby. Dainty, of the *nil admirari* school, per force of training, although not in the least intended to be such by nature, had often made the girl's cheeks tingle by his

satirical comments upon her enthusiasm. She only gave expression to what she honestly felt. But Dainty, accustomed to hear artificial rhapsodies on such points, was wont to be somewhat intolerant concerning them, and mocked such outbursts accordingly. He did not, it is true, know how his idle gibing stung.

But now all this was changed. Imperceptibly it was Jennie who took the lead in their talk; shyly somewhat, perhaps, at first, but gaining strength and confidence every time they met. Dainty never laughed at her outbursts of enthusiasm now; and a deference indescribable, but which no woman ever failed to mark and judge, has crept into his manner regarding her. His lips linger fondly over her name when he pronounces it; his voice softens as he speaks to her. He consults her continually. He is getting into the habit of bringing all his

annoyances to her. And Jennie's bright grey eyes shine with a marvellously softened light. There is a bloom in her cheeks, and a leaping of her heart that, verily, she does not quite understand. Even that bibulous, vision-seeing uncle of hers compliments her upon her appearance, and tells her she looks like a rose.

When the light of love glows in a woman's eyes, it is marvellous the change that it makes in her appearance. The plainest woman is transfigured, and, at all events once in her life, approaches to good looks. But when a handsome girl is touched with the enchanter's wand, it is then that you see beauty in its meridian, let men write or sing what they will about such culmination later.

Dainty has received Maurice's note after some delay. It has been forwarded from his regiment, with other letters, to the post-

office at Weymouth ; having travelled about thus in pursuit of him, because the mysterious agents who conduct that surreptitious Portland underground mail had no other clue to his whereabouts. It does not say much. Maurice, when he wrote it, had not got that little packet which, after such watching and anxiety, he had at last snatched from its concealment. He only says that it is possible to write to him in this manner—that he is heart-broken, hopeless, despairing—that the dull routine and monotony of the prison life are more than he can bear—that to be shut out from all intelligence concerning those near and dear to him, is punishment so severe that he will risk anything sooner than endure it longer. “It is possible for you, Dainty,” he pleads, “to alleviate this in some measure. If ever you loved me, I implore you to let me hear from some of you, once a

month, or so. You cannot imagine what only a few lines are to me. A letter, however short—a note, now and then, from you, Rosie, or my mother, too, will be bliss. Deeply as I have sinned—and, God help me, dragged all your names through the mire with my own—yet I have been heavily punished. Not a thing have I to look forward to, midst all the abyss of years that lie before me, but an occasional letter. Do not kill this hope that has but just dawned upon me. It was but a few days ago that I discovered such a possibility existed; and I am indebted for the forwarding of this to one of my more practised brethren in crime. I shudder when I write the words; and yet what better am I than he? Between the forger and the burglar there is little to choose. Still the unhappy wretch who pens these lines is your brother. Dainty, for our old love, and the old days, in the

name of that mother whose head I have bowed with shame, but who has so nobly assured me, both of her continued affection and forgiveness, be generous—I ask only a letter !”

Dainty drew a long breath as he finished this epistle. “Thank heaven !” he muttered, “the poor dear old fellow has got that, at all events.” And he fell once more to musing over whether it were possible to rescue Maurice from his dreary lot ; and then he thought he would go out to Upway and tell Jennie all about it.

He rarely went to the cottage now ; he disliked meeting the Captain. The veteran had never taken to him, and formerly had made slight scruple of showing his aversion. But the old mariner had an innate strain of chivalry in his disposition, that forbade him to be hard upon a man who had experienced a fall in the world. Of course he

knew the trouble that had come upon Dainty, and, upon the few occasions upon which they had met, nothing could exceed Captain Holdershed's studied courtesy. But unfortunately that was even more distasteful to Dainty than his former somewhat repellent demeanour. The Captain's overstrained politeness, well as it was intended, only served to remind him more painfully than ever of the disgrace that had befallen him. It was calculated to do so; for the Captain thought it right to put on a most lugubrious expression of countenance whenever he chanced to meet Dainty—to go through most ludicrous attempts at modulating his voice, which resulted usually in his speaking in a hoarse whisper, supposed by that gallant officer to be indicative of sympathy and commiseration, and finally to gulp down the sea-songs in which he was accustomed to indulge in a manner peculiarly marked and

exasperating to a man like Dainty. The old sailor was unable to control his propensity for Dibdin, but always pulled himself up suddenly, and looked as shocked as if he had been guilty of such indiscretion at a funeral.

Dainty did as he had done many times before—seated himself by the “Wishing Well,” and bid Nance go and fetch Miss Holdershed.

“I’ll do your errand,” said the child, as she slipped the shilling Dainty had given her into her pocket; “for if I don’t, you’ll just walk up and fetch her yourself. But I’d never move a foot to bring you together, if I thought I could keep you apart. You’re her doom—I know it, Mr. Ellerton; I have seen it there,” and Nance pointed solemnly to the deep clear waters. “If you mean her wrong, look to yourself. I am but a girl, but a girl’s hand is strong

enough to right a woman's wrong, if her heart don't fail her ; and mine won't. Nobody ever was good to me but she, and I'd die for her thrice over, if I could."

"Nonsense, Nance !" replied Dainty. "I am afraid you don't like me, though I've been kind to you in a way, too. But you must know that I should be the last person in the world to injure Miss Holdershed—"

"If I thought you would willingly," replied the girl, moving close to his side as he sat carelessly on the low stone parapet, and dropping her voice to a fierce whisper, "I'd stab you where you sit this minute !" And as she spoke, she drew from her pocket one of those spring dagger-knives, and snapped it open before him.

Dainty never moved. For a second the child's eyes flashed with a fierce light as she looked at him ; then closing her knife with a click, she returned it to her pocket and

said mournfully, "The lady has said so ; it is written in the waters. If I could but see 'the good people,' they'd perhaps tell me more." She paused for a few seconds, then exclaimed briefly, "I'll fetch her," and sped away upon her errand.

"That girl could be dangerous," thought Dainty. "I suppose she's a little touched in the head ; but there was a gleam in her eyes, for about a minute, that looked as murderous as anything I ever imagined. The little spitfire ! However, she's much mistaken if she thinks Jennie Holdershed will ever come to harm through me. I would sooner cut my right hand off than throw a gloom over her bright face."

And yet he knows that Jennie loves him ; that he is teaching her to love him more day by day. How is that love to end ? Is he prepared to marry the daughter of a poor Portland farmer ? And if not, what but sor-

row and sadness can come to Jennie of their constant intercourse. That he is gradually conceiving a deep feeling for her, Dainty is also to some extent aware, although he dissembles much to himself on that point; persuades himself that he is compelled to see her on Maurice's account, and yet he is conscious how often Jennie's graceful image floats across his mind, and mingles with the smoke-wreaths of his solitary pipe.

I doubt whether women quite comprehend how a lonely cigar at times advances their interests. Man is given to much meditation under such circumstances, and when he is in love, who can doubt what form such meditation will take?

But now Jennie, in her sailor hat and close-fitting serge dress, comes tripping gaily down the path, her hair just a little disordered; for those rich brown tresses always are so difficult to keep neat, and defy

even Jennie's deft fingers to restrain their exuberance—escaping here and there in spite of binding, knotting, and braiding; and yet, who that saw the girl could have wished it otherwise? There's a glow in her cheeks, and a sparkle in her eyes, as she extends her hands to Dainty and exclaims, "News of some sort, Frank, what is it?"

"I have a letter from Maurice to show you," he replied, as he took her somewhat sunburnt little hands in his. "I want you to see it." He gazed fondly into her face as he spoke, and the girl's colour rose as she met his glance.

"It is very sad," she said, after reading the note, "to think of one dear to you being so miserable. Poor fellow! Do you think he would risk something for freedom?"

"He must—he shall!" replied Dainty sternly. "I intend to venture everything.

But you ! it is not right that you should be mixed up in this affair."

"I intend to be, all the same," replied the girl, with a quick little nod of her head. "I claim a right to give such help as I may."

"How so?" he asked gravely.

"Because—because," replied Jennie, blushing, "it is my whim, and—well, is not that reason enough for a woman?"

"It might be for some, but not for you."

"Frank, you try me hardly, unfairly," replied the girl vehemently, as she once more raised her eyes to his. "Is it not enough that I wish to give you what assistance I can?" It was ungenerous, she thought, that he should press so closely. He knew why only too well. Did he wish to put her to the shame of owning her love before he had confessed his own? and Jennie turned from

him angrily with burning cheeks, as this idea crossed her mind.

But his hand clasped hers, and in low, passionate tones, he murmured into her ear,

"If I press you hardly, darling, it is because I hope to make you confess that it is for love of me you would do this. Won't you say so, Jennie, dearest?"

She turned towards him quickly, as she replied,

"You know it is, Frank. You know I have loved you from the first. How can you tease me so?"

"I shall never tease you again, my own," returned Dainty, as he clasped her in his arms and kissed her lips. "I hoped I had won you, Jennie, but was not quite sure."

"Oh!" replied the girl, as, with her head resting on his shoulder, she smiled up in his face, "I am afraid you had very little

doubt about it. I wish that I had kept my secret better."

"Isn't it better, pet, to have no secret to keep?" retorted Dainty, as he once more kissed her.

"Perhaps so," replied the girl, gaily, as she slipped from his embrace. "If you keep them as I have done, it is best to have none, undoubtedly. But come and sit down, Frank, and let us think over this letter."

So they sat down on the low wall, beneath the shade of the beech and horse chestnut; and the stream rippled, plashed, and gurgled over the stones, in soft, loving, laughing accompaniment to their talk—as sweet a melody as two lovers could wish to hear, in those pauses so incidental to such converse. They, perhaps, talked rather more about themselves than the topic which they had nominally decided to discuss; but that is not much to be wondered at. One thing was clear, they agreed:

Dainty must have an answer from Maurice before they could take any further steps. It was necessary to be quite sure that communication with him was thoroughly established.

At last Frank Ellerton rose to depart. The girl clung lovingly to him as she bade him adieu.

"Good-bye, dearest," she murmured. "I shall see you again soon—shall I not?—if it is but to assure me this afternoon has not been all a dream."

"Yes, the day after to-morrow," replied Ellerton laughing. "Do you think, Jennie, I could keep away longer?"

"I don't know," replied the girl; "you contrived to keep away for a year, remember, and I began to think I should never see you again."

"That was because I was a fool, Jennie, and didn't know the prize I'd left behind me."

"And perhaps you won't value it much now you've found it," she replied, half in jest and half in earnest.

"Take care of your lips, sweet ; there is but one way to close them when they give utterance to such blasphemy."

And Jennie paid due penalty for her last remark.

"Once more good-bye. May I say it ? You won't be angry ?"

"No. What is it ?"

"Then good-bye, Dainty, dearest," and Jennie fled rapidly in the direction of the cottage.

To call him by that name had long been a strange fancy of hers, but she had never ventured to do so, although she had called him by his Christian name almost from their first acquaintance. Still she knew that all his intimate friends, and even his own family, usually called him by this nickname,

and many a time had she also to herself.
Was it an odd whim of hers? I can't say.
But I don't think a woman would deem it
so.

CHAPTER IX.

BLADES MEDITATES CHANGE OF AIR.

JAMES CARNOUL, marched off, handcuffed and raging, after his escapade in the quarries, gives a curious instance of the untameable disposition that characterises men of his stamp—of how impossible it is to reclaim them—of how near akin to the brutes, even in civilized countries, a human being may be found. This man, bear in mind, is not utterly uneducated. You cannot account for his savage temper on the ground of ignorance, on the theory that he has sprung from the gutter, and has grown up untaught, uncared for. Whatever

his antecedents may have been, at all events the man can both read and write passably, and use good language when he chooses. One day Carnoul picked up, during his toil in the quarries, a half-fledged bird, and carried it home with him. He begged hard to be allowed to keep it, and, though contrary to rule, his request was acceded to. The governor thought it might soften the tiger heart of this man if he had something to tend, to care for, that depended upon him for its very existence.

Rare, indeed, was the sight of a bird in those fields of grey stone, save the screaming gulls that floated high overhead, and even his fellows took great interest in Carnoul's pet. He watched over it devotedly, succeeded in rearing it, and so tame did it become that it would perch on his head, hand, or shoulder, come to his whistle, and always welcome him with a flutter of its

wings, and a chirrup of delight when he returned from his labours. One would have said this man loved the waif that he had succoured. The poor little foundling undoubtedly did love him, and showed it as far as lay within a mere lark's capabilities.

Before he was taken to "the separates," or punishment cells, Carnoul asked permission to obtain some necessities from his own cell. The lark in his cage twittered and fluttered in a tumult of joy at the appearance of his master.

"Let me say good-bye to him," said Carnoul, doggedly.

The warders assented, and raising his handcuffed wrists, Carnoul opened the cage. The bird flew out, perched on his shoulder, nestled against his cheek, and chirped its satisfaction. Raising his open hands, Carnoul gave a low whistle, and the lark fluttered down and perched upon them, looking up

at him with its bright, bead-like eyes. Another second, then the cruel fingers, closing like a vice, crushed the life out of it, and, with a savage exclamation, Carnoul threw his dead favourite upon the floor.

What can you do with a criminal of this type? The lock, the lash, bread and water, alone keep such men in subjection.

When Maurice Ellerton found himself in his cell, with the bolt once more drawn upon him, he drew forth his prize, and sat for some minutes gazing at it. He turns the little packet over and over in his fingers, as a miser might handle his adored gold. He has so little to look forward to, that this trifling interruption of the hideous monotony of his life is an event that makes him almost tremble with anticipation. His hands shake slightly as he slowly undoes the string; then he unfolds the oil-cloth in which the packet is wrapped, in such deliberate fash-

ion as one has seen an epicure sip a wine of rare vintage. He seeks to prolong his enjoyment. At length he comes to the letter. It is without signature, but he recognises his brother's handwriting at a glance. A smile plays about his mouth as he reads it. Not very much in that letter, either, and somewhat cautiously worded to boot.

But there is such honest sympathy for him breathed in its every line, as makes it very sweet to Maurice. Dainty tells him that to think of his misery is insupportable ; that he has come into the neighbourhood to see if it be not possible to communicate with him oftener, and that he is assured it is so ; that he writes this to test the good faith of those who have undertaken to deliver it. Let the writer be but once assured that his note has reached its destination, and Maurice will hear constantly from him by the same channel.

"I write somewhat guardedly this time," says Dainty, "as those to whom I commit it may be more sanguine of success than the result may warrant; and yet they declare that this is certain to reach your hands. Let me only know that it does so, and then, dear Maurice, you shall hear more fully from me.—D." Such was the signature. A postscript informed him that all letters addressed to Thomas Turnbull would be brought to the writer.

Dainty, under Jennie's directions, had spent money freely, though not lavishly, in certain quarters that she had indicated. "Not too much," had urged Jennie, "or you will make them so reckless in the hope of gain, that it will ensure discovery, or their pockets being so well lined will attract attention. Be liberal, but don't exceed what I tell you. That is quite sufficient to enlist all engaged in this work, and they

are not very many, in your behalf. They will keep sharp enough look-out for a free hand, never fear."

Most of these hybrid smugglers are now on the *qui-vive* for anything addressed to Thomas Turnbull, and keen and practised eyes scan the quarries nightly, when the moon allows them to do so. At risk of repetition, let me once more point out that these stone-fields are without the prison, and perfectly open to the public; indeed, a foot-path runs through them.

Maurice has read and re-read Dainty's note perhaps a dozen times. How either isolated men or women will re-peruse letters from those they love, when their lot is very different from a prison! In far-away foreign stations, how precious are the loving words of sympathy to the struggling toilers of both sexes, who look forward to the mail as the one sweetener of their lonely

arid existence—the one thing that reminds them that there are those who have an interest in their fierce battle with the world—that there are eyes still which sparkle at their success, that will weep salt tears at their rebuffs! Little wonder that Maurice, with that vista of years staring him in the face, should linger fondly over his brother's letter.

But discipline, whether it be in camp or prison, cannot afford to make allowances for feeling, so Maurice dreamily sweeps up his cell, and pushes his little broom beneath the door. The latter has an aperture at the foot, of some three inches or so, for purposes of ventilation, which allows this; and it is one of the regulations of the place that the prisoners shall do so. A sharp authoritative tap. Maurice answers briefly “Here,” withdraws his broom, and is left to his meditations or slumbers.

He throws himself upon his bed, but though generally his day's toil suffices to lock his eye-lids almost immediately, yet to-night he cannot sleep. He is still thinking of Dainty's letter. Yes, he must answer that letter at once. To-morrow he will consult Blades about sending his reply. That worthy can of course manage it. Then he shall hear again shortly. Dainty, he fancies, has something more to tell him than he dared write this time. What can it be? Not much that can benefit him, but it is such a treat to get news of them at all. Maurice tosses restlessly on his narrow pallet, and longs for daylight. Usually his last thought is that the dread summons to rise and dress will greet his ear all too soon. For is there not oblivion of his misery in sleep? To-night it is otherwise, and it is not till towards morning that nature asserts her ascendancy,

that the weariness of the body conquers the unruly mind.

"Want to talk to you," says Maurice, with motionless lips, in an undertone, as they troop out to parade next day, preparatory to being marched off to their respective labours.

"Very good," replied Mr. Blades, with a quiver of his left eyelid, in a similar tone. "Want a leetle more advice, eh? Got your parcel all right? Anything to share with a chap?"

"There was nothing but a letter."

"Don't think much of your pals, you know. Never mind, we'll have a real jaw on Sunday."

"But I want to send an answer," muttered Maurice.

"Well, write it and give it me, and tell 'em tobacco in the stick comes grateful, and perwents the wind blowing such billet-dows about. Mum—ware hawk!" and Mr. Blades'

face became suddenly stricken with stony stupidity.

“No talking there,” exclaimed a warder, as he threw a keen eye in their direction ; but Mr. Blades’ countenance was blanker than any wall.

No further conversation of any moment was achieved between the two during the week ; disjointed snatches, such as the above, of course there were. Maurice wrote his letter, and consigned it to his more practical comrade to dispatch. This also Bill Blades, in mysterious undertone, informed him had been duly accomplished. That worthy’s position in the blacksmith’s shop gave him considerable facility in that respect. His work always lay in the same spot, while Maurice could never be quite certain where he would be employed. Had Dainty’s letter been intended for, or meant to pass through, the hands of Blades, it would have been hidden

in a very different place. It was always uncertain whether a prisoner would be enabled to approach any given heap of stone in the quarries. He might work within sight of it, know it was there, but find it quite unattainable, nevertheless. Round the narrowed range of the blacksmith's shop it was very different. It must go very hard with a practised hand like Blades if he could not contrive, in the course of the day, to approach the sign he recognised, under some pretext. Maurice would probably never have obtained his letter but for Carnoul's outbreak. The next day, though working in the same vicinity, he never had a chance to get anything like so near that memorable heap of "waste." But when the traffickers in this business once establish satisfactory communication with a prisoner, it becomes comparatively easy. As it was, except for Blades' keen eyesight and a good deal of

luck afterwards, that letter had probably never reached Maurice's hands.

But Sunday comes at last—a day for which Maurice has been longing, upon, it is to be feared, most heathenish grounds. At length comes that hour in which unrestrained talk is allowed—only sixty minutes, and he has so much to say! To his intense relief, Mr. Blades joins him at once, and plunges *in medias res*, without circumlocution.

“You see,” says that ingenious gentleman, “time is limited. The authorities at Portland have no idea of our talking about nothing, like so many members of Parliament. It'd do a few of them good—a turn here. If they'd a week to think out all they had to say, and just sixty minutes to say it in, they'd be better worth hearing. They'd have to leave out their coughs and hems and stammering, and a good deal of the froth of it; and froth in a speech ain't

quite the point it is in a pot of porter. There's mostly nothing below it."

It occurred to Maurice that his companion, like some of the orators he was ridiculing, showed signs of airing his own rhetoric—of seeking simply to convince his auditor of his own cleverness, instead of endeavouring to throw light upon the subject of discussion. It has been before remarked that Mr. Blades was possessed of inordinate vanity. His two special weaknesses were his abilities in his "profession" and his talent for speechifying. He had been a prominent member of a Judge and Jury club before his committal, and had distinguished himself at his trial by some rather humorous cross-examination of the witnesses. Not, as may be supposed, in the least to the point, but his impudent questions had occasioned some laughter—almost as satisfactory to the man, at the time, as if he had com-

pletely broken down the evidence against him. It was in the grain of him, and he could no more resist an opportunity to astonish anyone with the glibness of his tongue, than a cat can resist cream, a hypochondriac the narration of his ailments, or an undergraduate wearing a blue necktie in the latter part of March.

"Do you think I shall hear again soon?" asked Maurice.

"Of course you will," replied his companion. "The thing will be in my hands next time, and there will be nothing like as much difficulty about getting hold of it then. They know me outside, and are quite aware Bill Blades is top of his profession. Tell you I found last week what's a knife now. If I happen to drop on to anything else as useful, blessed if I shall be able to keep my hands quiet. I shall go out of this plaguy old building, if it's only to come back again.

I shan't be able to resist the temptation. Think of 'Escape of Bill Blades, the Notorious Burglar,' in all the papers. How the swells here would stare if they found my cell empty one morning, and I shouldn't want much to take me outside. There! never mind what I'm saying. It's only chaff. What'd be the use of it? I should like to astonish these Portland people, too," continued Mr. Blades, meditatively. "They don't quite believe in my talents."

Though Maurice listened attentively to all his companion said, he looked upon it as mere braggadocio. Already had he fathomed the extreme vanity of the man's character. Nevertheless he still believed that Blades could forward letters to the outside. True, this had not been as yet tested, for Dainty's note was manifestly no reply to his own, and it was not till he obtained an answer to that he could be assured on this point.

Yet Maurice did remember Mr. Blades' trial, and the extraordinary lock and bar breaking powers that had been then only too clearly proved against him.

However, all this mattered little to Maurice. No idea of escape from his bonds had as yet entered his head. He craved only to hear from his kith. That sufficed him amply at present. But the hour of license draws to a close, and calls forth no regret on Maurice's part, for Mr. Blades is now launched upon a stream of self-glorification which there is no stemming, and relates feat after feat of his own performing, which, although they testify to his abilities with regard to obtaining the goods his fellow-men deemed so securely stored, are most corroborative evidence that his detention in Portland is beneficial to the public.

"Time's up," he says, stopping abruptly in his harangue, and casting a quick, keen

look into his companion's face. "You think what I've been telling you's all bounce. Very well. You ain't likely to be leaving just yet," and Mr. Blades cast an ironical glance at Maurice's terrible badge. "Perhaps you'll acknowledge, some fine morning, that Bill Blades had the key of the lock after all; that he only stayed here because his constitution required it. It's a fine air, very, but I shall perhaps find it just a leetle too keen as the winter draws on; and if so, my dear friends, much as it will grieve me to leave you all, my duty to myself will require me to seek repose in other climes. Bless you—here comes the warder! Adoo, and don't forget that baccy in the stick is grateful."

Not very much in this conversation, and yet it showed that Mr. Blades' restless vanity was fermenting. Had the man been sentenced to be hanged, he would have ex-

perienced much relief from the newspaper comments on his forthcoming execution ; and that such should be conducted, as under the present law, privately within the gaol, would have been, indeed, a bitter drop in his last draught of existence.

But that idea of an escape has now entered that third head, into which it is so essential it should, before anything can come of it. Mr. Blades' vanity may compass inside the prison what Dainty and Jennie are so anxious to facilitate outside—Maurice's escape.

CHAPTER X.

KISSES AND COUNSEL.

DAINTY, when he got back to Weymouth, mused a good deal over that scene he had taken part in at "the Wishing Well." True, he had been pretty confident that Jennie's heart was his, for some time past, but it had been very sweet to hear her confess it—to see her cheeks glow, and her large grey eyes swim, as, abandoning all restraint, he poured forth the story of his passion into her ear. And the girl was frankness itself. She made no mock-modest pretence, but owned she was his, freely and honestly; that he had possessed her love

from the first. "But time was, Frank," she whispered, "I thought you would never care to ask for it. Ah! how happy you have made me!"

He pondered over these words with softened face—and Dainty's face had worn a hard, defiant expression of late. They had been very sweet to listen to at the time, they were very sweet to think over now. To this man at war with the world—at war, I grant you, chiefly on account of his own morbid feeling regarding his brother's disgrace—there was something inexpressibly touching in the great love that he had won. And still he muses dreamily, "How is this to end?" He has never harboured evil thought concerning Jennie. He does not now. But can he marry her—a girl so much beneath his own station? He should have asked himself that question before he permitted his lips to say what they have

uttered this day. And yet he thinks, "Why should I not? Where again shall I find such a love as this? What am I?—a broken man. If I wished to wed in my own class, what girl would have the courage to say 'Yes' to the forger's brother? Bah!" and his lip curled, "I have done with society. Why should I not marry her? The world I have hitherto lived in and I are henceforth strangers. Jennie knows my story, and it has but strengthened her affection. We will tread life's path together. How blind I was never to see how handsome she is, before! Tim Weaver's eyes are better than mine, that's certain." And Dainty gave vent to a low laugh, as he pictured to himself what wild work Jennie must have made with his impressible friend's heart.

The more Dainty turned all this over in his mind, the more he became confirmed in another idea that had for some weeks been

floating in his brain ; and that was, to leave the army. As he sat there, musing over all these things, gradually he shapes out a future for himself ; and when, throwing the end of his cigar into the grate, he rises to seek his bed, Dainty has determined to sell his commission—to rescue Maurice, if possible ; but, above all, to marry Jennie before Christmas.

Man has often much difficulty about making up his mind ; and when he has, done so the fates make mockery of his resolutions. As we get on in life, and look back upon our boyhood's dreams, how few of us have realized them ! We have never nearly achieved what we then thought. Many of us are not even in the groove we marked out for ourselves. We meant to be soldiers, and we find ourselves priests. We raved of "the ever free, the glorious sea," gloated over Marryat's novels, bewildered our

feminine relations with talk about spankers and cutwaters, and here we are, steady-going city men! Eminent barristers we have pictured ourselves, and find ourselves writers of burlesques. Whilst others there are, all hope of fame and ambition long since buried, who earn their scanty bread and cheese in dark, recondite fashion, that they would scarcely care to dwell upon. Men who started high of heart, and with boundless aspirations, but who now, with the life well-nigh crushed out of them, are content if they can earn a bare subsistence. The golden dreams of our youth, how they shiver! The golden dream of our love!—it is well for us when that, also, lies not shattered in the dust!

Dainty, when he rises next morning, feels more his old self than he has since that terrible day when Maurice first confessed to him his crime. At last his path is clear.

He knows now what he has to do ; he has made up his mind. He came to Weymouth dispirited, listless, almost purposeless—possessed with nothing but a vague idea of communicating with his brother. Now his pulses beat fiercely in response to a woman's love. No puling love, either, is it that he has won, but that of a wild, passionate heart, that will cling to him in stormy days even closer than in sunshiny weather—one that, though it could swell with exultation at his success in life, would nestle to him even more fondly in misery and disappointment. A woman who, far from staying his hand, urges him to try for Maurice's freedom, and is willing to risk, like himself, her liberty in the attempt ; one who will aid him and abet him, to the full extent of her capabilities, in whatever he would fain do.

Dainty knows this ; he feels that this girl,

in her passionate devotion, would sacrifice herself without a murmur, let him but lift a finger—that she would dare everything at a mere word from him. He loves her honestly and truly. Has he the right to mix her up in so dangerous a game as he is bent on playing?—for assisting the escape of a prisoner from Portland carries pains and penalties that would undoubtedly be enforced in case of detection.

He muses on this as he dresses. He will talk it over with her, he thinks; but nevertheless he does not feel much compunction about availing himself of her assistance. “We will risk this together,” he mutters. “I shall be cruelly tied without her aid. Nance and all these people will work for me at Jennie’s nod. They dare not play her false. But gold lavished by my hand would not ensure their fidelity. That imp Nance always looks askew at me, and but

for Jennie's influence, I'm sure, would refuse to give me the slightest assistance. I will point out to Jennie the risk she runs herself. My God! what a humbug I am!—as if she does not know that more thoroughly than I do!—as if aught that I could say would turn her from standing by me in this thing! But I will see her to-day, at all events."

How easy to find a pretext for seeing the woman we love! Dainty made his way out to Upway, and, contrary to his usual practice, went straight to the cottage. There he was unfortunate enough to find not only Jennie out, but the Captain at home. That bibulous veteran received him with the most stately and elaborate courtesy. In the chivalry of his nature, Captain Holdershed felt it incumbent upon him to display unwonted politeness and hospitality to a man upon whom the world looked

coldly—to one who, however unjustly, lay in some sort under the stigma of crime.

The Captain, in this phase, was a sight to see. In his studious endeavours to say nothing that could possibly wound the feelings of his guest, he was perpetually gulping down common-place observations that, to his bewildered mind, seemed, when half-uttered, to contain what might be deemed a painful allusion—a thing of itself inexpressibly irritating, as might be well supposed, to Dainty. The Captain considered that it was proper to assume an aspect of chastened woe upon the occasion, and had to struggle with an inclination to Dibdin's minstrelsy that gave him much trouble. Then again the proffer of something to drink was so essentially part of the Captain's views of hospitality that this also was matter of much tribulation to him. Aware that Dainty was of a temperate disposition (milk-

sop, I fear the gallant mariner would have termed it), he was unable to make up his mind in what form that hospitality should be displayed. Port wine, he thought, was essentially of a mourning character, both in colour and supporting qualities; but then he possessed none. At last, after much fidgeting in his seat, considerable stifling of "A can of good stuff had they twigged it,"—a very pet ballad of the veteran's, he suggested a glass of sherry to his guest, to which, in sheer desperation, Dainty consented.

Immense was the relief to the Captain's mind. He bustled about and produced not only a decanter for Dainty's benefit, but a black bottle containing something more congenial to his own tastes.

"Help yourself, Mr. Ellerton," observed the Captain, having solaced himself with a gulp of most portentously-coloured brandy-and-water. "I recollect when I was

anchored at Table Bay once, my first officer got into a scrimmage, and was locked up by the police—" Here the Captain, suddenly becoming conscious that he was treading on forbidden ground, stopped short, buried his face in his tumbler, then concluded vaguely, "and—and came back with some fresh vegetables in the morning."

Even Dainty, though half-annoyed, could scarce refrain from smiling.

"I see you've got a new bird since I was here last," he remarked, pointing to a bullfinch's cage in the window. "A pet of Miss Jennie's, I suppose?"

"Yes, he's a new 'un—such a one to pipe!" replied the Captain, enthusiastically. "Sings Dibdin through every morning! Blessed if he don't! But he's not satisfied, somehow. He don't like confinement. He's always trying to break his cage. I mean," continued the veteran, apologetically,

“he don’t—that is, he doesn’t, you know—that is, he’s not quite used to it yet.” And the veteran quite perspired, in his overwrought delicacy, at the thought that such an allusion might be unpalatable to his guest.

But the more the Captain strove to avoid all topics connected with captivity, so much the more did such subjects float through his perturbed brain. At last, emboldened by brandy-and-water, he conceived the idea of pouring some comfort into Dainty.

“You mustn’t be cast down, Mr. Ellerton,” he observed. “‘While there is life there is hope’—hope, you see. You needn’t despair—you understand. They get out sometimes. There was Jack Shepard, for instance, you know——”

But here the veteran pulled up dead short and covered with confusion, as it flashed across him that, despite of that

hero's prison-breaking feats, the gallows had been his ultimate destiny.

To Dainty the position was becoming insupportable, when the door of the parlour opened, and Jennie stood before them. She paused for a second at the threshold, then with a smile on her lips, and with love-lit eyes, walked forward and extended her hand to Ellerton.

"Welcome, Frank," she said; "I thought I should see you to-day, but fancied I should come across you outside. It is too bright an afternoon to spend in the house. You, too, uncle, I fancied were out."

"I'm afraid I am the cause of the Captain's detention," said Dainty. "I called, you see, and caught him at home. He has been sacrificing his love for fresh air to his sense of politeness."

"Well, sir," laughed the girl, "I can't. If

you would talk with me you must come outside."

Dainty shook hands with his host, and then followed his mistress down the little garden. The Captain looked after them with a somewhat troubled expression of countenance.

"Damme," he muttered, drawing a long breath, "what's she mean by calling him Frank? I am a muddled old idiot, and ought to have seen to this before. These sparks, when they come fluttering round a handsome girl like Jennie, don't always intend fair sailing. That fellow, with his soft voice and jessamy looks, maybe means to make a fool of my darling. I daresay he thinks an old hunks like me, who is always taking just one more tot of grog than's perhaps good for him, has no eyes," and here the veteran indulged in a wink of supernatural sagacity. "Perhaps he don't think

I love that niece of mine, just because we tiff a bit at times. By the Lord, sir!" soliloquized the Captain, bringing his fist down on the table with a tremendous thump, "if he thinks that Bob Holdershed, though he's laid on the shelf, wouldn't smash his telescope, though there never was such a glass, on the man's head who attempted foul play to Jennie, he'll find himself most blank, blank, &c., mistaken."

The Captain was most sincerely attached to his niece. It was no idle boasting this on his part. Most assuredly would he resent any injury or insult to Jennie, fiercely and promptly—and by his own right hand to boot, for the veteran had small opinion of law courts or legal redress. He was deeply imbued with the spirit of his favourite minstrel—had strong ideas concerning righting his own wrongs with his own hand, and but that, luckily for himself, he had no

grievances to avenge, would have led a troublous life of it with the local magistrates.

But the notion that Jennie is in danger from Dainty's attentions has now taken root in his mind, and he is of that stamp that it is very difficult to disabuse of an idea once established in their brain. The Captain conceives it behoves him to keep an eye upon his niece in future. A piece of supervision upon his part likely to interfere considerably with her and Dainty's schemes regarding Maurice, as it is quite possible that the well-intentioned veteran may discover reason to interpose at some critical moment, upon most erroneous foundation.

"I have been thinking," said Dainty, as they strolled along the bank of the stream that they had so often fished in company, "that I ought not to mix you up in this business of Maurice's."

"Oh!" exclaimed the girl, with an impatient shrug of her shoulders.

"You see," he continued, "I may come to grief over it, and it would make me very miserable if I brought harm to you besides. I shall run the risk of imprisonment if detected, and you, of course, the same."

She made no reply, but walked quietly on by his side.

"Therefore, although, of course, I shall have to come to you for advice, it would be better, perhaps——"

"That you should talk no more nonsense," interposed Jennie, brusquely. "Listen to me." And as she spoke she stopped and turned towards him. "You asked me yesterday for my love. How proudly I gave it you perhaps you hardly understood, though, shame on me, it had been yours these months past. Dainty, dearest," she continued, with softened voice, and clasping

her hands pleadingly on his arm, "I claim it henceforth as my right to be by your side in danger or in sorrow; to share your troubles, to do my best to comfort and help you in them. When a woman loves, it is her prerogative. She can exult even in suffering for the man who holds her heart. You won't refuse my aid now, Dainty, will you?"

He drew her fondly to him and kissed her.

"No, my darling," he whispered. "It shall be as you will."

She nestled still closer in his embrace for a few seconds; then, raising her head from his shoulder, looked archly up into his face, and murmured,

"Then, if a scrape comes of it, we shall be both in it."

"Yes, pet," he replied, laughing; "but we'll hope for better luck. It would be

a terrible mistake, in trying to help one person out of prison, to put two in, wouldn't it?"

"Yes. Kiss me once more, Dainty, and then we will talk business."

As Jennie Holdershed withdrew from her lover's embrace, she became conscious that a pair of big black eyes had been steadfastly regarding her recent proceedings. Their walk had led them to that willow-clothed little promontory that had been the scene of Jennie's first meeting with Mr. Weaver. Seated just within the fringe of the trees was Nance.

Lovers are usually somewhat disconcerted at the discovery of an unexpected witness of their caresses. It was, therefore, with somewhat heightened colour, and in angry tones, that Jennie inquired what she was doing there.

"Looking at you," replied Nance, stolidly.

"You don't mean to say you have come here for the purpose of watching me?" said Jennie, sharply.

"No," returned Nance, mournfully; "I was here by chance; but I saw you in his arms, just as I have seen you often in the well. Oh! Miss Jennie, Miss Jennie," cried the child, passionately, "no good can come of it! He'll bring harm to you, I know he will!"

"Why, Nance, you foolish girl," interposed Dainty, quickly, "I love her dearer than my life! It's not very likely that I should harm her."

Jennie's grey eyes flashed a grateful acknowledgment of her lover's speech, as she said,

"You dream, Nance."

"Yes, this dream very often; and has not 'the lady' shown it me besides? He

may love you, but he'll be your death all the same!"

"Go home, you little croaker!" laughed Dainty, as he dropped a shilling into her lap. "You'll dance at our wedding yet!"

But the child only shook her head mutely as she rose and walked swiftly away in the direction of her home. Her evil prognostications infected Dainty, and he became somewhat silent and distrait. In vain Jennie rallied him about the absurdity of paying any attention to the whimsical fancies of a half-witted girl; though Nance was not that either—she had her monomania concerning the Lady of the Wishing Well, but she was shrewd enough on other subjects.

Dainty even smiled himself at his own folly, but admitted that he could not put away the idea that it was a bad augury for his enterprise.

"I wonder, Jennie, that you are not dis-

mayed at her prophecy," he exclaimed at last.

"I!" cried the girl, laughing. "It would take a good deal to dismay me this afternoon. I am too happy. Besides, think what she has promised should her prediction be accomplished. If I am to die, it is clasped in your arms, Dainty. I think, dearest, I could meet death thus without much terror. To leave this world with your kiss warm upon my cheek would be to spare me half the anguish of the separation.

She was almost idolatrous in her love ; but do you suppose that Dainty thought so ? He bent his lips to hers in answer, and whispered,

"Better to live, my darling ; but should Nance's ill-omened prophecy prove true, may we die together !"

CHAPTER XI.

A BID FOR LIBERTY.

PORTLAND PRISON has been considerably scandalized this last week—*i.e.*, the ruling powers therein, albeit they can hardly help laughing. That terrible malignant, James Carnoul, is the cause.

It may be remembered that, after his escapade in the quarries, Carnoul had been condemned to the “separates,” or punishment cells. Here, according to custom, he was visited by the governor. Carnoul, crouching on the floor of his place of confinement, like a wild beast in its lair, received that dignitary’s visit with sullen apathy,

taking no notice. The warders were shocked at this breach of discipline and decorum, and indignantly explained to Carnoul that etiquette required him to receive the governor's visits standing. He growled inaudibly in response, and the next time the cell was opened for the governor's inspection, Carnoul stood—but on his head. This was more insulting than ever. Three warders promptly reduced him once more to a horizontal position, and wrathfully demanded what he meant by his impudence. But the incorrigible Carnoul only replied that “they had told him to stand; but nobody had said anything about *which end he was to stand on*.”

Such stories permeate through a prison in manner inexplicable, and no one enjoyed the joke more thoroughly than Bill Blades. That worthy, indeed, felt quite a pang of jealousy shoot through his breast. To a man of his vanity there was something irritating

in the idea that any one should become the hero of the community in which he dwelt, but himself. Mr. Blades ruminates over this subject more than is good for him. He feels that he, too, must do something that shall startle Portland generally. A savage outbreak of Carnoul's usual kind is foreign to his disposition, nor do such outbreaks command his admiration. But the audacious humour of Carnoul's last feat has tickled him much. It was a bit of cynical foolery quite after his own heart.

The more he muses over these things, the more it occurs to Bill Blades that it really is incumbent on him to show Portland what a farce their bolts and bars are when attacked by a first-class artist.

"They really believe," he soliloquizes, "that these gimcrack arrangements would hold me, if I had made up my mind to go. I do think—yes, I actually do think that I

shall have to show them how very easy Portland is to get out of. If I happen to come across two or three more essentials, I really must have a turn outside, if it's only for a few days."

There are people in this world born under a lucky star. No sooner do they begin to puzzle how to compass what they wish—to sigh because it seems unattainable, than lo! it is thrown at their feet. Girls despairing of the achievement of some country ball they have set their heart upon, suddenly get an invitation, and *carte blanche* for a dress, to boot. I know one philosopher of this kind whom I have often heard say, "I have no clothes, no money, and no billet, but you will see I shall be there,"—and she usually is. There are men who seldom see their way into grouse-shooting till the last week in July, but they find their way to capital moors all the same.

Mr. Blades was pursuing his accustomed vocations in the blacksmith's shop, a couple of days after he had given way to the above reflections, when one of the carpenters from the adjoining establishment brought in a lot of tools to be ground, reset, and repaired. As he handed them over to the warder in charge there dropped, unnoticed by either of them, a gimlet. This fell close to a small heap of *débris* and ashes that lay close by the forge at which Blades was at work. He saw it fall, and, moving sharply round to that side, with a slight movement of his foot kicked it among the ashes. The carpenter, having discharged himself of his mission, duly departed. Blades continued his work till he saw his opportunity, when he stooped down, seized his prize, and concealed it in the garter strap of his knickerbockers.

Very elate was that worthy when he re-

gained his cell in the evening with his booty undiscovered by the warders. Cautiously did he remove a small splinter from the flooring of his cell, beneath which he kept his treasures—the memorable piece of steel, now fitted with a rough wooden handle, and metamorphosed into a knife keen as a razor, a couple of large nails, and some half-dozen yards of marline.

“Ha!” he said, “I could do it, I think, with that, but I should like a chisel and an iron hook, to make a certainty of it. The gimlet wants a bit doing to, besides.” Then Mr. Blades carefully fitted the splinter in again and brushed the dust over it, not being satisfied with that performance for some minutes. Brushing it off again, indeed, more than once, and having recourse to a small piece of bees-wax that he had in his pocket, before it quite pleased his critical eye.

"That looks blind enough, I think," he said, at last. "Now, if anyone would make it worth my while, I'd have a shy for liberty before many weeks were over. I suppose I'm bound to try it, anyhow. With all those tools, it'd be sinful not to show these duffers what a sham their prison is. There really won't be a deal of credit in breaking out of a place like this. But it don't seem quite business like there being no swag to be got out of the transaction. I should like to do the Governor's house afterwards. But it'd be too venturesome—or else to leave Portland with the Governor's plate; my eyes, that'd be something to talk about!"

Mr. Blades, in his excessive vanity, a little underrates the difficulties of escaping from the prison, as he may chance to find, should his inordinate self-esteem impel him to try that experiment.

Maurice, meanwhile, is receiving constant

letters from Dainty. A little irregularly, it may be ; but still they do reach him through Blades, now every few days. That illustrious burglar, subsidized by continual sticks of tobacco, takes great interest in furthering this correspondence. Some scheming against the authorities is so congenial to his nature that it would have gone against his grain not to assist in it under any circumstances. But when it kept him so bountifully supplied with cavendish, of course he entered into it heart and soul. Dainty's letters have of late gradually dwelt upon the possibility of his brother's escape. He has pointed out that can Maurice once get outside the prison, there will be plenty of help awaiting him. In his last letter, he encloses a small but very accurate plan of the island, and tells him that minute instructions for his guidance will be sent him, whenever he can see his way to avail himself of them.

Maurice, sick at heart at the dread monotony of his life, turns the idea slowly over in his mind, till at last there awakens a feverish longing within him to at all events attempt freedom.

But no sooner has he arrived at this conclusion, than Maurice becomes painfully aware of how powerless he is to help himself. To him the bolts and bars of Portland seem insuperable. What is the use of promise of assistance on the outside, when you feel that the getting outside is impossible? To achieve this of himself, Maurice knows to be hopeless. He must have help from within the walls. His mind naturally reverts to his neighbour. He recalls the contemptuous way in which Mr. Blades has spoken of the precautions taken for his security—of how he boasted that he could leave the prison fast enough, if he thought it would conduce to his benefit in any way.

Clearly he must have a talk with Mr. Blades the first opportunity, and for a lengthened conference of this nature it was inevitable that he must await the Sunday.

He contrived, in the course of the week, to let that worthy know he had something important to say to him; so that no sooner were they turned loose for the customary hour of license on the ensuing Sabbath than Blades at once joined him.

"I've had a find this week, mate," said the burglar with a wink. "Not a very big thing, nor yet a very valuable thing, but if they happen to leave one or two more such about in my way, I'm blessed if I shan't have to make use of 'em. My fingers are always itching to see what I can do with tools when I get hold of 'em."

"What did you find?" asked Maurice, with some curiosity.

"Nothing you'd think of much account—

wouldn't know how to use it when you got it—which it were a gimlet," replied Blades facetiously.

Maurice certainly did not consider that any great acquisition, and his look said as much.

"No, I didn't suppose you'd think a deal of it," continued Blades, answering the unspoken comment visible on his companion's face. "But you'll maybe think more of it a few weeks hence. Now, what's the matter? Out with it quick, for time here is limited as regards talking and eating; though when it comes to work, they're liberal—oh! very—perhaps just a trifle too much so. They've calculated to about forty seconds what's the utmost to be got out of you on the rations as they stand. Ugh! the skin-flints!"

"Well," replied Maurice, "I want to get out."

"Singular that, very," observed Mr. Blades, meditatively. "There's fifteen hundred or so here suffering from that identical complaint. I'm quite surprised at your catching it!"

"Don't talk nonsense—you know what I mean. I want to try my hand at an escape."

"Try away, by all means, and if it comes off, I'll cheer, if I get seven days in 'the separates' for it. But you're clean mad. You!—why, you wouldn't have a ghost of a chance."

"I know that," returned Maurice—"not alone; but you're going with me."

"Well, you swells are cool, I've been told," replied the burglar, gazing at his companion in blank astonishment, "but blest if ever I heard the likes o' that!"

"Why," urged Maurice, "you are always

bragging that you can go out of this place when you like. Why should you refuse to take me with you?"

"O Lord!" cried Mr. Blades, "hold me, somebody! I'd faint dead, only the barbarians here bring you round with cold water, instead of brandy, as is the way amongst civilized people."

"Confound your foolery!" exclaimed Maurice, angrily. "What do you mean?"

"Don't talk so loud," interposed Blades quickly. "I mean this, that, whatever I might think fit to do, I shouldn't burden myself with a greenhorn like you in the business."

"You'd be well paid for it," retorted Maurice, sullenly.

"Hum!" said Blades, "that's another thing. Why couldn't you say so before?"

"Because I didn't think of it."

"I shall go off in hystrikes—I know I shall. I've heard—beg pardon—you were a man of business once."

Maurice nodded assent.

"Well, you came to trouble. It ain't much to be wondered at. Didn't you ever find out, when you wanted anything, that the easiest way was to ask whoever had got it to sell what he wanted for it? It would have saved a deal of time in the present instance."

"Go on," said Maurice quietly.

"Exactly," said Mr. Blades, who was never tired of hearing his own voice. "You want to slope from Portland—that's what's the matter with you. Well, you can't do it on your own hook no more nor a babby. 'Now,' says you, or, rather, ought to have said, 'Bill, my philanthropic pippin, what's your figger for restoring an innocent to his family?'"

"What will I guarantee you?" said Maurice, interrogatively.

"Now, really," said Mr. Blades, deprecatingly, and shaking his head, "this ain't business, you know. What's the use of your guaranteeing inside this precious old combination of stone, bars, and timber?"

"Tell me what you mean, then," said Maurice, impatiently.

"Pity you ain't got a quicker head for business," replied the burglar. "Just you sum up what you are good to lodge in the hands of a pal of mine at the 'Cock and Compasses,' Charles Street, Drury Lane, before I move a finger. I feel pretty ripe for a burst out myself, and I've got together most of the tackle needful; but I ain't ready yet, and shan't be, probably, for another fortnight. If you make it worth my while, we'll go."

"What will make it worth your while?"

asked Maurice. "I fancy anything within reason I can promise you."

"Let me think it over a bit." And the two paced round and round in silence.

"Listen, now," said Blades, at last. "Remember, I shall run a heavy risk in trying to take a greenhorn like you out with me. All the work will have to be done by me, because I reckon holding the candle will be about as much as you're good for—of course we must go by night. You're grit, and won't flinch?" he exclaimed, suddenly, staring his companion straight in the face.

"Try me," replied Maurice, simply, and his blue eyes met those of Mr. Blades' undauntedly.

"You'll do," replied the latter. "I don't often make a mistake about a fellow. You may be clumsy, but you won't funk. Now," he continued, "I'll have two hundred lodged in London before I start, and know

it is there. And you shall sign a promissory note to pay two hundred more within a month, if you get clean off. Will that do?"

Maurice laughed.

"What are you grinning at?" inquired Blades, testily. "Is it too much? This child don't do it cheaper, that's all."

"No, I am laughing at you," retorted Maurice. "You count yourself a man of business. What do you suppose a convict's promissory note would be worth?"

"Well, I mean some of your folks shall sign it," replied the burglar, somewhat chafed at his egregious mistake.

"I can't of course promise you anything till I have communicated with my friends," said Maurice. "What you want is two hundred down, and two more within a month, if I accomplish my escape."

Blades nodded.

"Very well. You say you are not ready yet. Continue your preparations, and think how you mean to proceed when everything is ripe. In the meanwhile I will see if the money can be found."

"Look here," replied the burglar, "you speak like a gentleman. You've made no haggling about the price, and I've put it up pretty stiff. If we deal, and do go, I'll play on the square with you. I'll not cramp your chance by hampering you with me. There's my hand."

And the two clasped hands.

If Mr. Blades' last speech sounds a little magniloquent, we must not do that astute gentleman injustice. He certainly meant to behave honestly to Maurice. He justly surmised that amateur help would be at his disposal as soon as he was outside the prison, but of amateur assistance Mr. Blades had the most supreme contempt. He judged,

in the few minutes that he had for reflection, the sooner he should disembarrass himself of his companion the better would be his own chance of escape. And with an assurance of two hundred pounds awaiting him in London, Mr. Blades felt that recapture would be bitter indeed. True, he was aware that no one as yet had ever got clear away from Portland ; but then, he argued, no one of his capabilities had ever tried. Mere bunglers, all these predecessors of his, he thought. A very different affair from the celebrated Bill Blades making such an attempt. As for that second two hundred, well, he never expected to see any of that, but it was just as well to put it in the bond.

Had he dreamt what help Maurice was to receive from the outside, and by what skilled hands it would be conducted, he

would probably have made it a *sine quâ non* that he should share his fortunes.

NOTE.—Since this story was penned, I have been informed that a prisoner did actually succeed in making good his escape from Portland. He was of an orderly turn of mind, and returned his convict garb, carefully done up in brown paper, to the Governor, about a year afterwards, with an intimation that he had no further use for it.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MAID OF THE MIST.

THE plot thickens; we are nearing the *denouement* of the drama. Dainty has formally requested permission to retire from the army. To a kindly letter from his Colonel begging him to think over it again, he has replied, briefly but courteously, that his mind was thoroughly made up—that much as he regretted leaving the old corps, yet circumstances were imperative.

“It must be, then, as you wish,” wrote his chief in reply. “You know well, Ellerton, how sorry we shall all be to lose you. If I thought it was a money difficulty, I’d say

have a talk with me, at all events, before you decide, but I feel that it is otherwise. I suppose I shall best further your views by sending on your papers to the Horse Guards at once, and will do so. Anyhow, you will come down to say good-bye, and shake hands with us all before you are gazetted out. We shall feel hurt if you don't manage to do that."

It cost Dainty a pang to answer this letter. It was so like the frank, cheery old soldier who penned it, with whom Dainty had always been a special favourite from the day he joined, a beardless boy. But his answer was decided, nevertheless, and he begged the Colonel to put his horses up for sale, to boot.

Most men feel a pang about leaving their old regiment. It is a wrench to say adieu to those with whom you have been living for years past on the footing of a brother

in that intimate *camaraderie* that I verily believe is unknown out of the twin professions; to think that you will never muster under the old colours more, that the sentry at the gate has saluted you for the last time. I have seen the tears stand in a man's eyes at his farewell dinner, and heard his voice shake, as he thanked his old comrades for drinking his health. Puling sentiment was it? Well, I don't know; he'd been five and twenty years in the corps, and I suppose had contrived to keep a heart somewhere, although he had been hardly so successful about his hair. If it were a thing to laugh at, I can only say there was little indication of that feeling visible in the faces of even the youngest of those that had met to bid him "God speed;" and "poor old buffer, he's awfully cut up," was the harshest commentary that met my ears upon that occasion.

Maurice's letters show that he is now

thoroughly possessed with the idea of escape, though, as to when he may see his way into compassing it, he is still utterly vague and indefinite. But Dainty considers that it is high time he made all his preparations for assistance, in the hope that his brother will ere long find himself without Portland prison; he is well aware that help then must be prompt if it is to be of use. Dainty has small difficulty, at the close of the yachting season, in hiring a smart hundred and twenty ton schooner. More fully manned than usual for her size is this vessel of Dainty's, and very eccentric is her master in the use he makes of her; weighing anchor and starting upon desultory cruises at all hours of the day and night; enthusiastic upon sea fishing, and strangely persistent upon trying the West Bay in pursuance of that diversion. The boatmen about the pier are at first much astonished at the vagaries of the Maid of the

Mist. She is always appearing and disappearing at most abnormal hours. She lies motionless at her anchorage, just inside the harbour at sunset, not a sign of life hardly on board of her ; the next morning she is gone. Has been seen off the Bill, or rumour comes that she is hove-to in the West Bay. While at other times the rising sun discovers her unexpectedly lying once more, again in her old berth, having come in silently and mysteriously during the night.

The skipper is a taciturn man, from whom little is to be gleaned, while their crew describe their owner as eccentric—"a chap who never seems to know where he wants to go, or when he wants to go there." But that he is a liberal master, they all agree ; strict only on one point—to wit : that they must be all ready to weigh anchor whenever the whim seizes him. "It ain't a liberty craft, and that's a fact," said one of them ;

“but we are well paid and found, to make up for it.”

So, after a little, the Maid of the Mist flits in and out of Weymouth Harbour without exciting much comment. But the year draws rapidly to a close. Yachts have folded their butterfly wings and returned to that chrysalis state in which such pleasure-craft pass the stormy days of winter and spring. Still does the owner of the Maid keep his flag flying, and constantly put out to buffet with the now often angry channel. She is a rare sea-boat, and makes light of bad weather. “He’s a queer customer—our master,” mutter the crew; “blessed if the worse it is, the better he don’t seem to like it!” And they might well say so, for Dainty has had his schooner out in some of the fierce October gales now blowing, which ordinary yachtsmen would have carefully

eschewed. But then Dainty is not yachting for pleasure.

He asked the Captain upon one of these occasions whether he dared go through "the Race," or try to run inside of it.

"God forbid!" answered that taciturn mariner, curtly. "She's a real good boat, and will do all one can honestly ask her; but we'd be swamped in the Race to-day, and go to splinters on the Bill, if we tried to run inside."

"Make for the West Bay, then, in your own way," replied Dainty.

Very seldom did Mark Redman, the skipper, venture to question his master's orders; but, upon this occasion, he replied, briefly:

"It's risking men's lives for nought. If we go in there we shall go to pieces on Chesil Beach, as like as not. You know

what sort of a surf's running there to-day, sir."

"Put her about," answered Dainty ; and walked forward to enjoy a good look at the boiling Race, about a mile to leeward.

If Dainty asked these questions, it was not the questioning of a fool. He honestly wanted to know what the schooner could do in extremities, and he knew that Mark Redman was not only a first-class sailor, but one who knew every inch of that coast, and was no shrinker from possible peril. Show him the why, and Redman was not the man to blench from danger. It was his employer's whim to yacht in rough weather—good ; the yacht was a fine sea-boat, well-found and well-manned, no great harm in that. But such tricks as running through the Race or up the West Bay with a heavy sou'-wester blowing, was simply juggling with life for no reason.

Dainty gets nervously anxious upon this point as the season progresses. If his brother is to succeed in his escape, it must be through the assistance of the Maid of the Mist; and though boisterous weather may favour his outbreak from the prison, though a stormy night may drown the noise of chisel or file, yet how is he to communicate with the island's rock-bound shores under such circumstances? Of course the haven of Portland itself will be utterly debarred him. Men-of-war's boats, pickets of soldiery, and the police, will effectually close any hope of successful rescue on that side. If Maurice is to be got off the island at all, it must be from some of those creeks or fissures used of old by the smuggling community. Can a boat approach such in rough weather? In Dainty's judgment, certainly not; and yet, when Maurice is once out of the prison, every hour he re-

mains on the island makes his recapture more imminent—the proceedings of the Maid of the Mist more likely to attract attention.

When he talks to Jennie on this subject, the girl owns that he is right, but she argues November is usually a much less boisterous month than October.

“To succeed, Dainty, we must trust to have some luck, and I have great faith in our success.”

“More than Nance would have, darling,” replied Dainty, moodily. “That child’s whimsical fancy that I am destined to be your destruction haunts me. I wish she had kept her prognostications to herself.”

“You are foolish, my own, to be upset by the fancies of poor half-witted Nance. She would say the same of anyone who threatened to take me away from Upway. Don’t you know that she regards me as her

good angel, and hates that anyone should pay me homage but herself? True," added Jennie, laughing, "she was good enough to make an exception in Mr. Weaver's case, but the quick-witted chit knew that she ran no danger from him."

"Well, Jennie, it has decided me upon one point. I'll not risk your life on board the Maid. I did mean to have asked you to marry me quietly at some one of the adjoining villages, and to have carried you off with me when the time came; now I am going to ask you to wait, and trust me till I return to claim you. Can you do that, dearest?"

"Can I trust you?" returned the girl, proudly, as she reared her head, and fastened her grand grey eyes on his. "You don't understand much about a woman's love, Dainty, or you would never ask me such a question. Do you think, when I gave my

heart, I did not give my faith? If I had not thorough trust in you, my love would lie shattered, shivered, this minute. I am yours, Dainty, whenever you think fit to come for me; and if months went by, and I never even heard from you, no testimony should make me think you false till your own hand or your own lips told me that you were what I can never think you. I know how much I am beneath you, but the man I love with my whole soul would never put such misery upon me. If he did," continued the girl, bravely, though not without a quiver in her voice, "whatever pain it might cost me, I would say I was well rid of him."

Dainty's reply was what may be easily imagined. There are episodes in love-making concerning which it is well to remember the old story of Apelles, and draw a veil over, when description fails us. But

a whisper did fall upon Jennie's ear, to the effect that she should never have to repent her firm faith in the utterer.

Still both women and men have pledged troth as true time out of mind, and been as thoroughly in earnest as these two at this minute; and yet what has come of it? If there were a cemetery for broken love-vows, how quickly boards of health would have to interfere with the over-stocking of the burial-ground!

Dainty goes back to Weymouth lighter of heart; there is something re-assuring in Jennie's strong, passionate love. That womanly devotion, that refuses to believe in our failure, has been sweet to most of us in our time; has comforted us in our hours of depression, and braced our nerves to once more buffet with the world. The Maid of the Mist is more restless than ever—now fluttering her snowy pinions off the Shambles, now

stretching away towards the Isle of Wight; sometimes folding her wings and bringing up for the night just inside the breakwater, and anon returning to her old resting-place in Weymouth harbour. Dainty, too, seems more occupied than ever with the geological formation of Portland. He is incessantly exploring that island. He carries a hammer and a small bag, into which he now and then gravely puts a fragment of rock. He also makes numerous notes, it is to be presumed, upon the same subject.

He has received a great stimulus of late. Maurice, in his last letter, has informed him of Mr. Blades' requirements, and Dainty has promptly replied that the instalment of two hundred pounds shall be duly paid to anyone that worthy may authorise to receive it at the "Cock and Compasses," whenever Mr. Blades may say that he is ready to act.

"That's what I call business," said the

burglar, when he heard of it. "You tell your pal, as soon as I can light of a hook we are off. He'd best pay up the minute you give him the office I've got it. I must trust you a bit, so I might as well right out. Take your oath the money shall be paid as soon as I say I'm ready; and I won't wait to hear it is so. You see, a hook such as I want is a big thing to run in; and what's worse, it's a cursed big thing to stow away when you've got it home. It ain't easy to hide. These warders are always prying and rummaging about our apartments when we're out—just like so many London landladies, and I'm rather nervous about their coming on my jewel-case as it is. Do you twig?"

And Mr. Blades gave a wink, and indulged in a grimace which he had acquired at a Music-hall at the east end from a popular comic singer.

Carefully has Dainty surveyed every cre-

vice and fissure on the west side of the island; for from that alone does he hold it possible that Maurice can escape. Chesil Beach, with its chain of sentries; the Castle town side, with its men-of-war boats on the *qui vive*; or the more open shingle about Church Cove, upon which the Custom-house people keep such jealous eye, are all alike, he thinks, impracticable. The West Cliffs, from their steep and almost unapproachable nature, are comparatively neglected; and yet Dainty thinks, in moderate weather, and more especially should the wind not blow from the south-west, that a boat might creep easily into one of these fissures, and that, with the assistance of a rope, or rope ladder, a man might easily descend to it.

He has drawn a plan for his brother's direction; he has selected the particular spot that he deems most eligible, and written the fullest particulars that he can think of re-

garding it. He has directed an agent in London to communicate with Mr. Blades' friends; and those mysterious individuals have written to their principal, that "the party he's a-doing business with is quite the gentleman, and has lodged one hundred all ready on account."

Mr. Blades' mind is inflamed at this intelligence. Visions of halls of dazzling light on the Surrey side, of comic songs, of unlimited tobacco, of unstinted drink, of the society of ladies more free than polished in discourse,—all these flash across the mind of the burglar. A picture of Elysium, which is, sad to say, confined by no means to the felonious classes; it is much in vogue under the plausible title of "seeing life" amongst the youth of the metropolis.

Yes, it is seeing life in one aspect, though it is to be feared that those who so affect it, whether on the north or south side of the

Thames, don't quite realize the life at which they look on. The skeleton at the revel is beyond their ken. Yet to trace the history of the leading characters thereof, is as gruesome a task as ever anatomist of character set himself down to perform. The lives of those "great comics," how marvellously short they are! And do you think those of their drink-bemused admirers are profitable to follow out?

Dainty, formerly so cool and imperturbable, waxes nervous and irritable under this mental strain. He seems to lack the stuff of which conspirators are made—that calm, equable temperament that nothing daunts, that nothing hurries. Many a promising revolution has been wrecked because some one of the leaders could bear to wait no longer. Fortunately, in this case, the initiative must be taken by Bill Blades, and that illustrious burglar has been used to wait,

like a Sioux Indian on the war-path, for the accomplishment of his purpose. There is no fear that he will risk failure by precipitation ; and yet, when the time for action comes, Mr. Blades is usually prompt and resolute.

Dainty, also, will probably be cool enough and quick of action when the drama begins, but this anxious expectation of the rising of the curtain it is that frets him. It is not the being under fire, it is the getting there that is the great strain on the nerves of the recruit. When the first shot or two begin to tell, then is the most thrilling time of the battle. You are not yet warm to the work, the fierce lust of carnage has not yet leavened your soul ; your comrades begin to drop sparsely at first, then a trifle quicker, and apparently from all but invisible causes. But as you close up, and the corpses lie thick and gory, the blood is

in your nostrils, the savour of the strife makes your pulses bound ; the savage desire to kill possesses you ; the thirst for your fellowmen's lives maddens you ; little you reck who falls by your side then. You scarce pause to look as you press on, always on, till either you stop breathless, flushed and victorious, or reel back with the crushed, broken, despairing sensation of defeat.

CHAPTER XIII.

DIEPPE GROWS WEARISOME.

MRS. ELLERTON and Rose Fielding all this time are still dragging on a monotonous existence at Dieppe. To the sorrow-stricken mother, this quiet seclusion seems the fittest life she could lead; but with Miss Fielding it is otherwise. Deeply as she was grieved at Maurice's sentence, acutely as she felt his disgrace and punishment, yet, as is only natural at her age, she has now recovered her spirits. She looks back mournfully still at the sad desolation his crime has wrought, not only on himself, but on all those she holds dearest

to her. Nevertheless, at one-and-twenty it is rare indeed that sorrow does not mercifully yield to the assuaging influences of time. Miss Fielding begins to find her present life somewhat hard to bear. She is bored past conception.

Not for one moment does she allow this to become apparent to her aunt. Rosie is far too loyal and too loving in her disposition not to do her utmost to conceal such feelings. No daughter could be more devoted than she to her who had been mother to her so long. But the quick eyes of a woman, so loving and sympathetic as Mrs. Ellerton, are not easily blinded. She saw that, bravely as the girl struggled against it, she was getting moped, distrait, living this isolated life in a never very lively watering-place. It was only natural; Rose Fielding, the spoilt daughter of a wealthy household, a pretty and popular girl in a pleasant London set—fêted a

little for her good looks, a little for her natural *espieglerie* and clever talk, and perhaps even a little more as an heiress in a moderate way, must after a time feel their humdrum Dieppe life very wearisome.

"It is not good for her," thought Mrs. Ellerton. "It matters little to me where I bear my cross. I never can mix in society again, but in England there would be plenty of people willing to take charge of so pretty and attractive a girl as Rosie. Moreover, is she not still the heiress she ever was?"

There was something consolatory to the poor mother in this reflection, that her son had so frankly confessed his crime.

"He fell," she would whisper to herself, "but he did all in his power to make restitution; he had resort to no subterfuge or legal quibbles; he owned his wrong-doing, and if he wronged Rosie, he is now making bitter expiation for so doing, and, thank

Heaven, the child is not a penny the worse."

Mrs. Ellerton did not know of Mr. Laroom's opinion. She was not aware that it was a moot question yet, in legal circles, whether Maurice had not committed perjury to save the woman he loved from the consequences of his fraud. For Rolf Laroom, in his first burst of anguish at the utter collapse of those webs he had been at such trouble to weave, had been by no means reticent concerning Maurice's passion for Miss Fielding; had confided it, indeed, to Mr. Simmonds, and two or three other worthies of that stamp, who, though they could be close as oysters when they saw cause for keeping their mouths shut, yet upon this occasion divined no reason why they should not indulge man's natural disposition for scandalous story. So that Maurice Ellerton's case had been often discussed, both on

the Stock Exchange and in the Law Courts.

Rosie, too, of late, has been considerably excited by Dainty's letters. They know that he is staying at Weymouth, and that he hears pretty constantly from Maurice. But while Mrs. Ellerton is under the impression that Maurice has, from interest made in his behalf, good conduct, or some other cause of that nature, obtained relaxation of the prison rules with regard to correspondence, Rosie is thoroughly aware that Dainty has found means to communicate with his brother surreptitiously. Once more does that idea which she had so preached to her cousin on his last visit cross her mind. Can it be possible that Dainty is plotting Maurice's rescue? If he can send letters to him in an indirect way, he can send files, chisels, rope-ladders, &c.—all the necessities, in short, that Miss Fielding's lively imagination depicts as essential to breaking bonds.

Rosie's ideas on the subject are derived principally from the London stage, and novels of the Jack Sheppard or Monte Christo type. She muses over the famous escape from the Château d'If, and wonders whether a sack, and simulation of death, might not be equally effective at Portland. She knows that the great convict establishment is on the sea, and almost persuades herself that Maurice might win his way to freedom in that wise. It is most irritating, she thinks, being so far from Weymouth. If she could but see Dainty, he would tell her everything; and here Rosie makes a little *moue*, for she is fain to confess that Dainty had always been a very good hand at keeping his own counsel, and that all her coaxing and teasing (the combination, too, was difficult to withstand) had at times failed to discover what he meant to do, or what he had done.

She shakes her pretty head, and knits her delicate brows a good deal, as she reflects on this. She wants to know all about it, for she is quite impressed with the idea that Dainty is already engaged in a tremendous conspiracy; and then Rosie feels almost frightened at the idea of being confidante to anything so desperate. Her belief in Dainty's coolness and daring is unbounded. Could she have seen him this last week, her faith in that former virtue would have been somewhat shaken. Moreover, there were certain other passages in his life, of late, that Rosie would hardly have regarded with approbation. It was not likely that Miss Fielding would look upon Jennie Holdershed with favourable eyes. Not that there was any petty meanness or jealousy about Rosie, but she rather liked Dainty herself, and therefore could be hardly expected to hear calmly of his appropriation by another;

that other, too, a girl so inferior to herself in social position. But Dainty had never mentioned Jennie's name in his letters. It was scarce likely that he would, although he had not the faintest idea of Rosie's tenderness for himself. He believed that she was attached to his brother.

How blind men are compared with women on this point! A woman rarely fails to discover the victim within her meshes; but men are constantly quite oblivious of their success, and blunder along, all unconscious that the fruit may be had for the plucking; fruit, too, that they would oftentimes have fain gathered, had they but known it might have been so easily won. Still Rosie had never deluded herself with the idea that Dainty had more than brotherly affection for her. She knew all about Maurice's sentiments, and rather regretted them. She had carefully abstained from ever giving him the

faintest encouragement. If she had a little tinge of the coquette in her—and she had—she at all events did not wish to exercise her spirit of caprice on one whom she loved very dearly, although not quite as he would have her do. And Maurice had felt this; loving her with ever-increasing passion, yet knowing intuitively that his love was hopeless—that to speak would be but to pain her and himself. The bankruptcy of Ellerton, and its consequences, had put an end to all that for ever.

“Rosie,” said Mrs. Ellerton one morning, as the girl sat listlessly in the window, gazing vacantly out at the quiet street in which they lived, “I am afraid this is a very humdrum life for you.”

“Why so, my mother?”

“You have no friends or acquaintances, child. At your age it is hard to stand so isolated as you do here.”

"I fancy Dieppe society would be somewhat harder to endure," replied Miss Fielding, as her lip curled, "if the men who stare so rudely at me whenever I walk upon *la plage*, or the pier, are to be deemed a fair specimen of the male section composing it."

"No, I do not mean that; but I think it would be well for both of us if we moved to England."

"What has put that into your head, mother?" and as she spoke the girl rose, crossed the room swiftly, and seated herself in a low chair by Mrs. Ellerton's side.

"My trouble, I fear, has made me selfish, dear; and I have not sufficiently considered how terribly dull all this is for you."

"My mother, why do you say so? Have I ever complained?"

"No," replied Mrs. Ellerton, with a sweet

sad smile, as she drew the girl to her and kissed her; "but do you think it is necessary for my children to complain before I see things are not well with them? You are not yourself, child—the brightness is dying out of you. We mustn't have that, Rosie; and therefore I decree our departure from Dieppe forthwith."

"But are you sure you will not regret it?" said Rosie in a low voice, as she fondled her aunt's hand.

"Why should I?" returned Mrs. Ellerton quietly. "It was as well, perhaps, to go abroad when we did. Nay more, on your account there was urgent reason that we should. And being here, we could not do better than stay. I am not a worldly woman, I hope, Rosie, but I have lived in the world all my life. Our miserable story is no doubt by this time pretty well forgot. If we settle ourselves anywhere but in

London, or Brighton which is much the same thing, I don't suppose there will be many people who will recall it to their memory. While you, darling, what have you to do with it?"

"Oh! mother," cried Rosie, reproachfully, "as if it did not concern me! No!" she continued, passionately, putting her little hand on Mrs. Ellerton's lips, "I am not thinking of my property, and you know it. No," she replied, in answer to her aunt's deprecatory shake of the head, "I don't think you were going to say so; you wouldn't be so cruel. But can you think that trouble to Maurice or Dainty is not also sorrow to me? Ah! surely you know me better!" And here Rosie fairly took possession of her aunt, and kissed and fondled her, a slight moisture beneath her long lashes gradually increasing, till both

women indulged in the luxury of a good cry.

“Nevertheless, Rosie,” said Mrs. Ellerton, at length, “we will leave Dieppe as soon as may be. Write to Dainty at once, and tell him to find us a home in England—you and he shall settle there.”

Now that letter, Miss Fielding felt, required a little consideration, so she put on her hat and started for a blow on the pier, during which to think it over. Miss Fielding held strongly to the principle that fresh air was a marvellous clearer of the intellect.

Rosie’s first idea was to select Weymouth, but she fell into the natural error that, because they knew Maurice was an inmate of Portland, Weymouth generally was also aware of that fact. She thought their presence there would attract attention; might, indeed, prove fatal to that very conspiracy she so longed to hear about. No,”

she reflected, "Weymouth will not do ; but it shall be somewhere very near Weymouth."

Bournemouth ! Well, she'd never been there, but that could not be far off. Miss Fielding, after due consultation of Bradshawe upon her return home, comes to the conclusion that Bournemouth will do, and sits down to write accordingly.

"Dear Dainty," she says, "mother and I are wearied of foreign parts. We are tired of Dieppe, and so, my cousin, it devolves upon you to find us a home in England. My life here has become painfully monotonous. You know how men will stare at a girl with any pretensions to good looks, who has the misfortune to be continually without an escort ; and, Dainty, I am not positively ugly, although, sir, you never do properly appreciate my manifold attractions. But other eyes are not quite so blind as yours,

and walking alone here has become positively unbearable. Don't think, though, Dainty, I am writing in this way to you on a mere paltry grievance of my own, but the mother, too, professes herself tired of Dieppe, although, bless her, I half suspect it is a good deal on my account. Still we have made up our minds to leave as soon as you shall send us word you have found a home for us in England. We have selected Bournemouth, and I should imagine you will have little difficulty in finding something to suit us there.

“And now I am all impatience to know what is to come of this correspondence you have opened with Maurice. Have you any idea of carrying out what I once suggested? I suppose I ought not to ask. But, Dainty, I *must* know; please do tell me a little about it. I promise to be satisfied with only a hint of ~~what~~ you intend to attempt.

Am I foolish to ask that much?—I fear so; but, if you would give me the tiniest inkling of what it is you propose doing, I should be satisfied. As it is, I can think of nothing else. Your continual residence at Weymouth, and your having opened this correspondence with him, must mean something. You know, Dainty, how deeply interested I am in anything that concerns him. For pity's sake, do let me know what you are about.

“The mother is pretty well, and sends her love.

“Ever, dear Dainty, yours,

“ROSIE FIELDING.”

When Frank Ellerton received that letter he was more confirmed than ever in his idea that Rose was strongly attached to his brother.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CAPTAIN INTERFERES.

CAPTAIN HOLDERSHED, now it has dawned across him that it is his duty to watch over his niece, and save her from the possible results of her own indiscretion, is much troubled. His confidence in Jennie is unbounded, but he does think that her intimacy with Dainty may give her a sore heart, and wet eyelashes, if he does not see to it. That gallant veteran falls into that very common mistake of thinking that, because he has been round the world, he is therefore essentially a man of the world. As if there were not men who traverse the earth incen-

santly, and remain children to their dying day, with regard to that somewhat questionable acquisition, worldly knowledge. It may be useful, but it is doubtful whether that intimate acquaintance with the springs of the worse side of human nature—that habitual analysis of the motives of our fellow-creatures—conduces much to one's happiness.

Now the Captain is quite aware that when he interferes with his niece, he has to deal with what, in his vernacular, he denominates a d——d mutinous crew! But if there is one thing that dear bibulous old gentleman believes in, after the transcendent powers of that cherished telescope, it is his capabilities of strategy. "Women, sir," he would say, in confidential moments, to his intimates, "won't drive. They must be humoured, coaxed, and then, by blank and blank, you can turn 'em round your little

finger." The real fact being, that his lady passengers, in his seafaring days, had simply bullied his very life out, and led him a very hard time of it indeed; strategical concessions to Mrs. Thompson having been instantly followed by arbitrary and unconditional demands from Mrs. Johnson. To know of what selfishness and exaction your fellow-creatures can be capable, you must have made a long sea-voyage. To fathom how far women can be unreasonable, you must have doubled the Cape. I have known a lady indignant because there were not fresh eggs for breakfast six weeks after we had lost sight of land. The captains of Green's clippers could strange tales unfold on this subject, if they chose.

The Captain's first steps in chaperonage are unfortunate. To his delicate insinuation that it is unseemly for a young woman to be so much about with a young man as

she is with Mr. Ellerton, unless she is going to be married to him, Jennie laughingly retorts,

“Well, there’s no saying what I may do, when he asks me.”

“But that’s just it,” replies the Captain, angrily. “He hasn’t asked you, and I won’t have you go about with him in the way you do.”

“How is he to ask me,” replies Jennie, demurely, “if I don’t give him an opportunity?”

“He’s had plenty of opportunities, and——”

“How do you know he’s not taken advantage of them?” interrupted the girl.

“He has never spoken to me on the subject,” said the Captain, loftily.

“Which is no sort of reason that he should not have whispered a word or two to me,” laughed his niece.

"Has he? I insist upon knowing."

"So you shall."

"Go on, Miss."

"When I have made up my mind to tell you."

"Do you call this respect for your uncle, you hussy?"

"That's not a pretty name to call me. Do you consider it's respect for your niece, to hold her guilty of not being able to take care of her own good name?"

"Pitter patter, clitter clatter, chitter chatter!—a woman's tongue is like the wind off the Cape, which always blows, but never in the right direction! You are all alike!"

"Which shows how little you know about us, my dear uncle. Neither are our tongues so given to foolishness as you imagine."

"You're a saucy wench!" replied the Cap-

tain, sulkily, quite overcome by this last retort. "But I spoke for your good, child—I did, honestly."

"Don't I know it?" replied the girl, as she glided to his side, and laid her cheek against his grizzled locks. "But leave Jennie to herself. Frank Ellerton will work her no harm, believe me."

So far the Captain has not made much way; but that does not prevent his still brooding over the subject. He is too chivalrous by nature to descend to espionage of any sort. He confines his telescope still to the discovery of wondrous accidents in Weymouth Bay. The collisions, upsets, and narrow escapes from drowning, that he there continually witnesses, are terrible evidence of the awful recklessness of the Weymouth people, or of their visitors, albeit, the local press still chronicles no loss of life. But the Captain has not abandoned his

point; he can do nothing with his niece; he will have a talk with Frank Ellerton.

“Your lords, with such fine baby faces,
That strut in a garter and star,
Have they, under their tambour and laces,
The kind, honest heart of a tar?”

hums the Captain, moodily, as he reflects over this last resolution; though why he should connect Dainty with the aristocracy is not quite to be explained. But the veteran having taken it into his head that Frank Ellerton's intentions regarding his niece are not honourable, lumps him with that visionary debauched upper-class, so dear to the lovers of nautical melodrama; wherein the dissolute Lord invariably abducts Lovely Sue while honest William is away at sea—William and his shipmates, of course, turning up just at the critical moment, and covering that insolent ravisher with confusion.

But while the Captain is still meditating

in this fashion, he is suddenly astonished by the advent of Mr. Weaver, in deep mourning. That gentleman has returned from leave, having, in the interim, buried his father. He has rejoined his regiment, with his passion for Jennie rather increased than otherwise during his enforced absence—with his worldly prospects somewhat improved—and has made his way out to Upway immediately. He has determined to ask Jennie more seriously than ever to share his lot. His father's death has put him into possession of some four hundred a year, and Mr. Weaver is very earnest in his love now that he fancies he has some chance of bringing it to a prosperous issue.

Jennie is out; but the Captain receives him with much cordiality. Tim is a special favourite of his. The Captain cannot but admire a man who can, when called on, take his liquor with so little detriment to himself

as Mr. Weaver. Not, as I have said before, that this was a besetting weakness of the Irishman's, but he had a wondrous faculty that way when occasion required him to test it, and could swallow with impunity what would have bereft most men of their senses.

Mr. Weaver's mourning makes the Captain somewhat uncomfortable; he feels that he must restrain his natural disposition to harmony in the presence of such emblems of late sorrow, but he considers it all the greater reason for a prompt production of a bottle and glasses. He fills for himself and his guest with a solemnity befitting the circumstances, and finally winds up by trusting Mr. Weaver "left all well at home." Then becoming conscious of his blunder, he stammers, and finally falters out, "I mean that I hope your mother and sisters are as well as can be expected."

"Thanks, yes," replied Mr. Weaver, shortly; which curtness only further tended to confuse the Captain, who took it as evidence that his unlucky observation had hurt his guest's feelings—a thing inexpressibly disturbing to the bibulous but tender-hearted veteran.

Mr. Weaver, however, was absorbed in thought as how best to broach his attachment to Jennie. For Mr. Weaver had resolved this time to open the trenches in form, and to attack Jennie armed with her uncle's consent and approval. He was in a position now to claim her fairly. No great match in a worldly point of view, certainly; but then Jennie was a daughter of the people, and could scarcely hope to do better. It had never crossed Tim's mind that Jennie's heart was no longer in her own keeping. He had never marked how her eyes glistened and her cheeks glowed while he talked

of Dainty Ellerton ; and yet what a tell-tale face it was to one who should hold the index ! Her every thought was transparent to him who could read aright. There was no guile about Jennie. Her very soul looked out at you from beneath the straight dark brows. Her play of feature was marvellous, and the girl's countenance answered to every gust of the spirit within, as the sea to the gentle wooing or boisterous caresses of the capricious breezes.

"There's nothing like coming to the point at once," thought Tim at length. "A big fence grows bigger the more you look at it."

"Captain," he exclaimed, "I've come to ask a favour of you."

"Happy, my lad, to do anything I can for you," replied the veteran.

"Well, it isn't exactly a favour, and yet it is—oh ! bother, this'll not do at all. Sure

it's your consent and blessing I want."

The Captain stared, as well he might, for he was in complete ignorance of Mr. Weaver's attachment for Jennie.

"Ah, sure you know what it is I mean. You must have seen it all along. I'm consumed with love entirely. You'll not be such an old—I mean you'll not be so devoid of feeling as to withhold your consent."

"What the blank &c. blank are you driving at?" inquired the Captain, fiercely.

"Is n't telling you I am?" returned Tim sharply. "It 'd be hard to speak plainer, I'm thinking. Maybe it's the liquor has muddled your brain. You've not much of a head, you know."

The Captain turned purple with wrath, but this was too serious to be met with a salvo of his usual artillery.

"My head, sir," he rejoined, majestically, "is clear enough, if other people's were.

What the devil do you want my consent to?"

Rather a relapse, this latter part of his speech.

"How am I to make the old fool understand?" mused Mr. Weaver. "Haven't I been drumming it into him the last five minutes, and sorrow a bit does the old villain comprehend me!" "Whist, now! ah, leave the tumbler alone," he continued aloud, as the Captain proceeded to reinforce his dignity with another gulp. "Haven't I been telling you all along I want to marry Miss Jennie, and am I not asking you to consent to it?"

"Well, I am considerably (blanked)," replied the veteran, bringing his fist on the table with a mighty thump, "if you ever mentioned Jennie's name till this minute."

"What's that to do with it?" inquired Mr.

Weaver, laconically; "if I didn't I meant to do so—it's all the same."

"It's not, sir!" thundered the Captain. "How the —— do you suppose I'm to understand you?"

"Faith, and you do now, anyway," retorted Mr. Weaver. "By my father's death, I've come into a little money, and could take care of a wife. Will you give me Jennie?"

"And what does Jennie say about it?" inquired the Captain, with much curiosity and considerable conviction that what his niece said would be a good deal more to the point than any decision he might come to.

"I don't know."

"Never asked her—eh?" said the Captain.

"Asked her, bedad! Oh! yes, I've asked her often enough?"

"And she——"

"Well, sometimes she laughed and said

nothing, and sometimes she laughed and said no. But, you see," continued Mr. Weaver, utterly unconscious of the absurdity of his speech, "she's clever is Jennie, and knew that I'd nothing to keep a wife on. And then," continued Tim, diplomatically, "I hadn't your consent."

"Well, my lad," replied the Captain solemnly, "you have it now, and my best wishes for your success. But there are two things to bear in mind—I can't interfere with my niece's feelings" (diplomatic this remark—"not successfully" should have been added), "and that other confounded fellow's always carrying on with her."

"Fellow!—who?—what is he? Name the spalpeen!"

"Well, as I tell you," continued the Captain, confidentially, and taking no manner of notice of Tim's last remark, "he's always about with her. I've spoken to her on the

subject, but the jade pays no attention at all to the old uncle who brought her up."

This was quite a poetical flight on the part of the aged mariner; but the Captain is by no means singular in his illusion. We all of us are blest with venerable relatives who, if we ever distinguish ourselves, are powerfully impressed with the idea that they remotely contributed to it. A friend of mine, who has made a name for himself, often complains that he is oppressed now with the attentions of a maiden aunt, who, in his early days, regarded him with the utmost hostility. "I was relegated to the nursery," he once remarked, "on her spiteful accusation more often than for all my concentrated sins of the twelvemonth put together."

"But who is this man?" inquired Mr. Weaver, returning to the charge.

"He's an intimate friend of yours, unless

you've been yarning about him ; but I never liked him from the first. Maybe you'll not be so fond of him either, now that you find he's a rock ahead.

‘ And yet, my boys, would you believe me,
I returned with no rhino from sea,
Mistress Polly would never receive me,
So again I heaved anchor—yo, yea, ’ ”

hummed the Captain, as an appropriate commentary upon Mr. Weaver's case.

But that gentleman was, for the moment, wondering which of his brother-officers had so supplanted him in a few weeks, and paid little attention to his host's subdued melody. Not one of them had ever known Jennie when he left ; who could have so rapidly taken his place in her regards ? True, she had always pooh-poohed him when he waxed earnest in his love, but he had always rejoiced in the ineffable satisfaction of thinking that he had no rival in her affections. Who could this man be ? And then

Mr. Weaver's thoughts carried him off into some peculiarly Irish ideas of "satisfaction to be demanded," and the benighted views the authorities in these times took of duelling, more especially in connection with officers in the twin services.

"But who is he?" exclaimed Tim, at length.

"Get out with your blethering about who he is! If you hadn't been singing his praises at the pitch of a strong sou'-wester, maybe she'd never have learnt to care for him," retorted the Captain, testily. "D'ye think the best way to win a girl is to be always singing another chap's good deeds in her ear. Take a man who has been about the world's advice, and chant your own qualifications next time."

"But who the divil is it? Can't you speak, you obstinate ould sinner!" cried Tim, fairly losing his temper.

“By —!” replied the Captain, furiously, “I’ll stand no more——. Ah! here he is, and can speak for himself.” And, as he spoke, Jennie, followed by her lover, entered the parlour.

“Dainty Ellerton!” ejaculated Mr. Weaver, aghast.

“How do you do, Mr. Weaver?” cried Jennie. “Welcome back to Upway.”

“How are you, Tim?” said Dainty, quietly.

But the Irishman was simply dumb-founded. He shook hands with them mechanically. With his hero-worship for Dainty, he felt that if he was his rival it was indeed all over with him.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.



